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"MELIORISM"

BY

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A Member of the Kansas Bar

MELIORISM

A series of Theological Essays, written in an effort to point out to the reader a more reasonable and satisfactory interpretation of the ideas of God, the Universe, and the Hereafter, and to put him in touch with the progressive thought of the present relative to these ideas.

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PREFACE

Meliorism teaches that there is throughout nature a tendency toward improvement. When applied to mankind it represents that conception of life which is marked by a gradual growing better. This term has been adopted as the title of this book for three reasons:

(1) Because these chapters were first written as the articles of a small periodical leaflet called "The Meliorist."

(2) Because Meliorism is in a measure a synonym for evolution, which, I have no doubt, is,in the main,the correct conception of what we are wont to call the "Creation."

(3) Because the present great progressive theological movement, in the furtherance of which this book is an effort, is in the direction of progress toward a higher, a better and a truer conception of God and the universe.

The author has tried to present his arguments and ideas upon the questions discussed in this book in such a manner as to be plain and intelligible alike to all. He does not pretend to have advanced a single new discovery along the lines he has pursued, but hopes that he has gathered together and arranged the arguments and discussions presented in such a form as to convince the reader of the reasonableness of the position taken upon the various matters herein presented.

It is his opinion,that there are thousands of people all over the country who are not and cannot in the nature of things be satisfied with the conception of God and of nature presented to the world in orthodox Christianity. It is hoped, that those who are seeking for a more systematic and definite conception of God and nature, will find herein many ideas and suggestions that will assist them in building for themselves more consistent and better conceptions of these great subjects.

J. A. F.

Sedan, Kansas,
April 3, 1914

CHAPTER I

PROGRESS IN THEOLOGICAL AND RELIGIOUS THOUGHT

For many years, it has seemed that our education, our civilization and our morality have all outgrown our theology. I have read the history of philosophy and works on metaphysics, have studied and watched the progress and development of our knowledge through the natural sciences, and then have considered the teachings of the Church—the teachings that people get from our ministers generally throughout the country. When I compare the results I am surprised and confounded. I would that all these things might agree. Our notions of God and nature, our metaphysical theories and our natural sciences should agree; but alas, they do not!

Upon further investigation, I find that the great leaders in the religious and theological world do not believe and teach many of the things that our common people are taught to believe. To illustrate:

Rev. John H. Dietrich, pastor of St. Mark's Memorial Reform Church of Pittsburg,Pa., on June 6, 1911, in an interview regarding the charge of heresy lodged against him said:

"I do not claim to be orthodox, in fact, I have no desire to be, for it represents a system of thought based on ignorance and superstition. There is no question about the difference between the orthodox theory of the world and my theory. They believe in a system of things which starts in the fall of man, with an atonement wrought out by a dying God midway and an eternal hell at the end. I believe there never was a fall of man: that from the beginning he has risen; that the atonement is not wrought out by a dying God but by

every man coming into harmony with the laws of the universe which are the laws of God; and if men will do their part the kingdom of God lies ahead instead of an endless hell."

On the 4th day of April, 1911, in an interview, Rev. Luther Freeman, formerly pastor of the Independence Boulevard Methodist church, Kansas City, Mo., and then the President of Morningside College, Sioux City, Iowa, said:

"I did say the Bible was not inspired in the sense that its authors had had any direct revelation from God to write what they did. There is nothing particularly new in the views I expressed. I have been preaching them many years in Kansas City and elsewhere. I said we should learn to read the Bible correctly and to reject those parts that do not conform to what the world is learning to accept as the true conception of God, the loving father.

"God certainly never commanded his prophets to write that slavery is good, that war is good and that the other bloody and cruel teachings to be found in some of the books of the Bible are to be accepted to day as his precepts. I said we must read the book of Job, for instance, as a drama, as the work of a great philosopher and poet and not as the word of God. The author of the Lamentations was no more inspired by God than was Shakespeare, but that is no reason why we should throw Job out of our libraries."

"Our colossal theologies of Judaism, Christianism, Buddhism, Mahometanism, are the necessary and structural action of the human mind."—Emerson's Representative Man.

"Under all this running sea of circumstances, whose waters ebb and flow with perfect balance, lies the original abyss of real Being. Existence, or God, is not a relation, or a part, but the whole."—Emerson's Essay on Compensation.

"We are none of us born with a belief in God, but we are all born with a tendency to believe what we are told."—Inge in Psychology of Faith.

"Rationalism tries to find a place for God in the picture of the world. But God, whose center is everywhere and his circumference nowhere, cannot be fitted into a diagram.

He is rather the canvass on which the picture is painted, or the frame in which it is set."—id.

"For as we have often said, the assumption of the inspiration of the text (of the gospels) has been shattered, definitely and irretrievably shattered. Out in the wilderness we must now blaze out a path amid the thorns of criticism. But this is gain. Criticism is better than dogmatism, as manhood is better than childhood.—Foster's Finality of the Christian Religion.

"The four gospels, which are our main sources for the evangelical history, are neither biographies nor strictly memorabilia, but are books for the purpose of evangelization and edification. They use their material much as the popular preacher retells the Parable of the Prodigal Son, imaginatively reconstructing it, supplying all sorts of embellishments, and adapting it to the practical end in view, unmindful to a degree of fidelity to the literal story."—id.

"At all events, however, so far as the modern man is concerned, he can no longer believe in miracles."—id.

"The Book of Zechariah, which Jews, as well as Christians, give as authority for the description of the last Judgment, refers merely to municipal plan for municipal improvements laid out by the Maccabes. The poetic and fanciful language of scriptural scribes has been misinterpreted."—Prof. Paul Haupt of Johns Hopkins University, address Apr, 21, 1913, before American Philosophical Assn., at Philadelphia, Pa.

"The affections and emotions are eminently the court of appeal in matters of real religion, which is an affair of the heart; but they are not, I submit, the court in which to weigh the allegations regarding the credibility of physical facts. These must be judged by the dry light of the intellect alone, appeals to the affections being reserved for cases where moral elevation, and not historic convictions, is the aim."—Tyndall in Fragments of Science.

"Whatever revolution takes place will not prevent us attaching ourselves in religion to the grand, intellectual and moral line at the head of which shines the name of Jesus. In this sense we are Christians, even when we separate ourselves on almost all points from the Christian

tradition which has preceded us."—Renan's Life of Jesus.

"There is a time in the past beyond which our memory does not reach. Moreover we have reason to believe, that there will be a time when the chain of conscious states will be broken forever. This consummation is called death. In short, the subjective world is transient; it grows by degrees, its existence is very precarious; it flickers like a candle in the wind and will disappear again."—Carus's Soul of Man.

"But man dieth and is laid low: Yes, man giveth up the ghost and where is he: As the waters fail from the sea, and the river wasteth and drieth; so man lieth down and raiseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake nor be roused out of their sleep."—Job.

"I will not attempt to say how far it is desirable that persons who are perfectly satisfied with a creed which they have never examined should (as it were) pull up the roots of their own faith to see how deep they go. I merely want to point out that the occurence of certain emotional experiences, though undoubtedly they may constitute part of the data of a religious argument, cannot be held to constitute in and by themselves sufficient evidence for the truth of the intellectual theory connected with them in the mind of the person to whom they occur."—Rashdall in Philosophy and Religion.

"We are beginning to see that even personality, in any human sense of the term, would not honor Deity, but would deny his infinitude and mar his perfection."—Henry M. Simmons in New Tables of Stone.

"Innumerable are those who have given their lives for a cause they thought sacred. Xenophon told how an unnamed Armenian urged forgiveness for the king who had condemned him to death,—much as Jesus did for the murderers. Human godlikeness did not have to wait for Christianity. Even so orthodox a man as Father Taylor, when asked if any other human being had ever been as good as Jesus, is said to have replied, 'Millions.' All who love, show the inmost essence of divinity, if 'God is love'."—id.

Yet, there seems to be a tendency among religious leaders to tolerate and even encourage people in holding to teachings that the best intellects of out civilization have discarded.

There seems to be a feeling prevalent among the church leaders that the people are not ready for the change from traditional fiction to proven facts; that it is not safe to turn them loose to live a life for the life's sake—with no incentive to do right beyond the fact that it is right.

The great thinkers in the various Christian churches no longer believe in the personal man-form of God, the Deity of Jesus, his resurrection from the dead, and various other theological beliefs taught in the Bible. However, many of these leading thinkers are very cautious. They actually deceive the people into believing that they hold to the old time orthodox beliefs, yet at the same time and almost in the same breath they tell those who "read between the lines" that these old beliefs are not true. A striking illustration of this sort of deception is found in the Outlook of August 17th, 1912, in an article written by Dr. Lyman Abbott, entitled "My Confession of Faith." In this article the Doctor says:

"It might be sufficient to answer categorically: Yes, I do believe in a personal God; in the divinity of Jesus Christ; in his resurrection; in the miracles; in the inspiration of the Bible. But such categorical reply would be understood in different ways by different readers. I therefore avoid the categorical reply, and set forth here my Christian faith, as far as possible, in non-theological terms."

After reading this short paragraph, the average person who does not study the thoughts that the skillful writer puts between the lines would say that Dr. Abbott believes in a personal God, in the Divinity of Jesus, in his resurrection from the dead as taught in the Bible, in the miracles as related in the Bible and in the Bible itself, as being the work of specially inspired writers, who wrote as the Almighty gave them utterance. But the fact is, that Dr. Abbot does not believe any of these things in the sense in which the common laymen believe them. He does not believe that God, the Great Creator of the Universe, is a being in the shape and form of a man, who has his throne in some particular place in the Universe, and from that high abode controls and governs the Universe as an ordinary superintendent would control a factory or a business house. He does not

believe anything of that sort. In the same article he uses this language:

"The Latin notion of a human Jupiter, renamed Jehovah, made to dwell in some bright particular star, and holding telephonic communication with the spheres by means of invisible wires, which sometimes fail to work, dies, and the old Hebrew conception of a divinity which inhabiteth eternity and yet dwells in the heart of the contrite and the humble, takes its place."

Here he specifically says, that the notion of a human Jupiter, renamed Jehovah, dies. In other words, a human form of God dies and the old Hebrew conception of a divinity which inhabiteth eternity, and yet dwells in the heart of man, is a true conception of God. He does not believe in a personal God at all then; for a personal being can not dwell in the heart of another being, except in a figurative sense. But the Doctor was evidently not using figurative language; for he was trying to describe to his reader the dwelling-place or habitation of God.

Again he says in the same article: "That God is in nature, filling it with himself, as the spirit fills the body with its presence, so that all nature's forces are but expressions of the divine will, and all nature's laws but habits of divine action—this is the doctrine of the Fatherhood."

Nothing could say more emphatically that God is not a person in human form, but is the great creative force which pervades all nature and which fills the universe.

As to his belief in the divinity of Christ, he says: "That God is in human experience, guiding, illuminating, inspiring, making all willing souls sons of God and joint heir with Jesus Christ—this is the doctrine of the Holy Spirit."

In this quotation he plainly suggests that Jesus Christ was no more a son of God than any "willing soul" might be. That God may guide and inspire any human being, thus exalting him to the same sonship as he did Jesus.

In regard to the Bible he says: "The Bible is unique and incomparable in literature, because it is the history of the revelation of God in human experience, beginning with the declaration that God made man in his own image, bringing out in law, history, drama, poetry, prophecy, that divine

image more clearly, until it reaches its consummation in the portrait of Him who was the express image of God's Person and the brightness of his glory."

What does this clause mean? What is the "Revelation of God in human experience?" Our Bible is supposed to be about nineteen centuries old, the Old Testament part much older. The real meaning of this quotation is this: That the Bible protrays God as human experience nineteen centuries ago and prior thereto in its crude and primitive state, had in its imagination looked upon God.

In regard to the miracles, after having suggested that he believes in miracles, he says: " I do not believe that the laws of nature have ever been violated, for this would be to believe that God who dwells in nature and animates it, has violated the law of his own being," which is to say, that he does not believe in miracles at all, that he believes the laws of nature have never been broken or violated. He goes on to say that the "Geology of the region of the Dead Sea remains a perpetual monument to attest and interpret the story of the destruction of the Cities of the Plain." In this,he would suggest that the Bible story of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is true, and in the same breath suggests that it was a natural phenomenon. This cannot be possible, because the Bible tells us that these cities were destroyed by personal act of God, because of wickedness of the people, and not by a phenomenon of nature in the form of a volcanic eruption, or an earthquake. If the laws of nature were not violated in miracles, then Jesus did not turn water into wine, did not cast devils out of human beings, and a hundred other things claimed in the Bible to have transpired as miracles. Dr. Abbott does not believe these things ever transpired.

Such an article as this, it seems to me, is unsatisfactory and misleading. What we need for the common people today is plain English which states in terms that a layman can understand, what our beliefs are and what the best evidence we can find tends to prove in regard to these matters, rather than indefinite expressions which are susceptable of conflicting interpretations.

I want to do all in my power to dispel error and ignorance, but I would not sweep away one evil only to have it replaced with something worse.

When we come to understand that our Bible is fallible and is the work of men, will we give up in despair and refuse to read the message of God that is written wherever we may look in the universe; or will we seek the larger and more consistent revelations of God throughout nature? When we realize that we must give up our deity-conception of Jesus, will we discard him altogether; or will we still recognize in him that great leader, whose short but active life set on foot the greatest religious movement the world has ever known? When we find that the little god, which we have created in the image of man, cannot be the great Creator and Preserver of all things, will we in our rashness say "There is no God;" or will our minds be turned to greater and more consistent conceptions of that infinite Cause of system, order and design in all things?

I believe and confidently expect that, as the people let go of these erroneous theological notions, the majority of them will lay hold of the higher and more consistent conceptions of God and his relations to the rest of the universe. Yet, whether they will do this or not, depends upon certain conditions:

In the first place, if the people let go of their old beliefs intelligently and because they have investigated and find them to be erroneous, the result will be good; for every one who takes the pains to think about these great questions enough to reason to the conclusion that the old beliefs are wrong, will be impressed with a broader view and a higher conception of what must necessarily enter into the makeup of true theology. But if people let go of the old beliefs negatively, passively and because of indifference to the whole matter, then the result will be bad; for such persons will not take the pains to lay hold upon something better. As a rule, they will be pessimistic and lose hope, and the change will be for the worse.

However, there is a safeguard against the tendency to bad results from teaching the people the faults of their old theological beliefs and pointing them to the new. It

is a matter of history, that we are slow to change our theological beliefs, whether right or wrong. These beliefs have usually grown up with us from childhood and become second nature with us. They are the result of childhood associations and environment. This tendency not to want to give up our old beliefs creates in us a spirit of antagonism and, where it does so, we begin at once to think and to study the problems involved. If we change at all, we usually do so after due consideration. If we decide we are wrong, we are then on the lookout for something better. This puts us in the best possible position to accept something better when it is presented to us. One is sometimes impatient with those who are slow to accept new theories and new lines of thought, but this is as it should be.

I have unbounded faith in the ultimate triumph of truth and I cannot believe it is possible, that our orthodox Christian theology, which is but the ancient Jewish mythology, supplemented by the traditions and imaginations of an unlearned and superstitious people of two thousand years ago, which is contrary to and disproven by all the science and philosophy of our present enlightened civilization, and which is shut off from all hope or possibility of change or revision by its being considered a direct revelation from God, is the proper guide for the religious and moral betterment of our generation. On the contrary, I believe it is possible for us, aided by the already great and ever increasing knowledge of facts and conditions, and the power and ability we have developed in the course of the educational advancement of our age, to arrive at a more accurate and consistent conception of the universe and of God.

CHAPTER II

INTOLERANCE

There has always been a great lack of tolerance among religious peoples of dogmatic views on matters of theology. Early Christian intolerance left behind a trail of blood, torture and death. History is full of the recitals of persecutions on account of differences in theological beliefs. Not only was this so in former times, when good, honest and religious men and women were crucified and burned at the stake or sent to the rack of torture because of their difference of faith from the prevailing theological creeds and dogma, but today in modern, civilized, Christian America, the feeling among the various sects or divisions of the Christian church alone as against one another is often most bitter. It is not uncommon to see the lines of preference, favoritism and even ostracism in social and business affairs drawn between members of the different Christian churches.

This intolerance is much more vehement when directed toward those who are not affiliated with the church. It makes no difference what one's character, for honesty, upright life and good citizenship is, if he dares to have and express an opinion or belief different from the prevailing orthodoxy, he is at once a dangerous man, and undesirable citizen, a person to be shunned and despised as an enemy of mankind. Is not this the same spirit which burned people at the stake in olden times? Is not this the same spirit which put Jesus upon the cross? If the Bible account is true, Jesus was crucified because he had views different from the prevailing theological orthodoxy and dared to express those views publicly. There exist in the breasts of orthodox Christians today feelings of contempt and hatred for the very names of Voltaire, Hume, Paine, Ingersoll,

Huxley and Darwin. Why? Simply because there were some things about the Christian theology that they did not believe and they were honest enough to say so publicly, and not because they were not honest, not because they were criminals, not because they were uncharitable, not because they were not good neighbors, good fathers, good husbands or good citizens. The majority, if not all of these men accepted and lived the fundamental principles of the Christian religion. They all believed in the religion of "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them," of "Go thy way; from henceforth sin no more," of "Bless and curse not," of "By their fruits ye shall know them." But they did not believe in the fundamentals of Christian theology; they did not believe in the immalculate conception of Jesus, they did not believe that a being could be half man and half God, they did not believe that one being can justly pay the penalty for another's crimes, they did not believe in the theory of the atonement, they did not believe that Jesus died for the sins of the world any more than did thousands of others who all through the ages have preferred death to dishonesty.

The spirit of intolerance which of old persecuted, crucified and burned people at the stake is the same spirit of intolerance, which today looks with suspicion and scorn upon all who refuse to accept the unreasonable articles of faith of dogmatic Christian-theology.

The majority of us know little of the truth, and no man knows all the truth. The word "faith" itself is an apology for ignorance of the truth. We would not talk of "faith in God," "faith in Jesus Christ," and "faith in immortality," if we knew the truth in regard to these subjects. After all, what assurance have we that our faith is correct that and the other fellow's is incorrect. The very fact that it is a faith is enough to brand it with a degree of uncertainty. Who knows the facts about God—whether he is in the shape and form of a man, or is simply the organizing and sustaining force at the center of the universe, as suggested in the beautiful lines from Emerson?

"O my brother, God exists. There is a soul at the center of nature, and over the will of every man, so that none of

us can wrong the universe."

Some of the great students of history and theology are now trying to prove that there never was on earth such a person as Jesus, and one is surprised at the amount and plausibility of evidence produced in support of this contention. In view of the fact, that human frailty and imperfection have had to do with every supposed verbal communication of the Divine will to man, that almost nineteen centuries have passed since any such supposed communication has been reported, why should our notions on these matters be considered anything more than beliefs or "faiths"? Is it a sin for a man to have his own honest beliefs about these theological subjects, even though they may be wrong? It is one of the fundamental principles upon which our American government was founded that every man should have the liberty to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience. In other words, every man should have the liberty to have his own theological views, and to work out in his own way his relationship with God, and to assume toward God in his worship, whatever attitude and relationship his conscience should dictate as the proper worship toward the Great Architect who created, governs and sustains the universe.

Man's conduct toward his fellowman is the proper subject of our criticism, and to a certain extent, is even a matter of legal regulation. There are certain fundamentals of religious conduct which we all accept and which even our laws recognize and require between man and man. So long as man lives up to the full measure of our present Christian civilization in respect to those acts of honesty, charity and morality, which make him a good citizen and a good neighbor, why should he be regarded as unworthy of friendship, respect and confidence, because his notions and beliefs upon questions of theology and metaphysics differ from ours?

Emerson says: "The exclusionist in religion does not see that he shuts the door of Heaven on himself in striving to shut out others." If we never concede that we might possibly be wrong, we never put ourselves in a condition to find out whether or not we are wrong; we say in advance

that we are not expecting anything better; we refuse to listen to anything different from our preconceived notions. Dogmatic Christian theology is today just where it was nineteen centuries ago. We today know a thousand times more about plant life, animal life, the geological condition of the earth and the astronomical condition of the universe, than was known nineteen hundred years ago. To the man who is willing to consider this additional knowledge, the universe with its workings means infinitely more than it did to the primitive Christian; yet the dogmatic conceptions of God are just as small, just as childish, just as primitive as when it was believed that He made the sun stand still, in order to permit a general to win a battle, or that he killed or caused to be killed all the "first-born" of an entire nation, because a monarch refused to permit the children of Israel to leave his country.

Let us grant to others the same right that we claim for ourselves to consider these matters in our own best way, and decide them by our own best judgment. Let us not be angry with those who do not arrive at the same conclusions that we have reached. Let us not feel that our notions of God and the universe should control the world. Let us believe that there are other theories and faiths that may be right and ours may possibly be wrong. Let us hope for a theology truer to nature than the one which we advocate, and finally, let us lay aside the prejudice we have toward other faiths, and consider any man a benefactor to humanity who will conscientiously think on these matters and give to the world the honest conclusion which he reaches after such careful consideration.

CHAPTER III

A BROADER CONCEPTION

On account of the way in which and the conditions under which we receive our first experiences regarding theological matters, a fair and impartial consideration of such matters is a very difficult act for the majority of grown-up people. One's first notions of God and the universe are obtained in childhood, when he has neither opportunity or desire to investigate the truth of the things taught him or resist such impressions as are from day to day made upon him. To the child the subjects of God, the devil, heaven, hell and the hereafter are awe-inspiring. He has no inclination to question what he hears. These subjects are loaded with such stupendous and awful possibilities and consequences, that he is afraid to think for himself or to doubt what is told him. Before reaching manhood and womanhood these impressions of childhood become convictions—convictions not proven, but assumed; not based upon evidence, but upon faith and fear; not matters of judgment, but matters of habit, second nature and a part of one's self.

Instead of considering any evidence that comes to us upon theological subjects and bringing to bear upon it the same store of experiences and knowledge that we would use in considering and passing upon other important subjects, we are inclined to ask only this: "Is it new or old?" "Does it agree with what we have always been taught upon these subjects, or not?" If it is old and agrees with our already formed notions, we accept it; if not, we reject it. This is not as it should be. The problem of the ages cannot be solved by the credulity of childhood. We are not bringing the right subjective element to bear upon this problem

of problems. The Christian people of today have, in many respects, the same theology that the Jews had 2,000 years ago: We believe in a God who created man "in his own image," therefore we believe God is a being who looks like a man. Our children are taught to call him "the good man." Yes: objectively, he is thought of as a man with body and parts—eyes, ears, hands and feet. He has a mind that works after the fashion of the human mind; it thinks, wills, loves, hates. He is moved to wrath and revenge, and is touched with pity and mercy. God has his dwelling place in heaven, whose location is described in such familiar terms as "in heaven above," "on high," "mansions in the skies." These expressions were invented when people believed that the earth was flat, and that up and down were absolute terms. Now we know that the direction of "up" at any one place on the earth, makes the circle of the heavens each twenty-four hours; that astronomers have pierced the heavens to the distant stars, and still they find nothing that can logically be called in the old phraseology "the throne of God."

As the antithesis of God and heaven, the Christian believes in the devil and hell. The devil is in general shaped like God and man. Our children are taught to call him "the bad man." He is composed of body and parts, and has a mind that thinks, designs, plans, and hates; seeks revenge and glories in evil deeds. His dwelling place is hell. Hell is "down," "below." As heaven is the home of the good after death where God will be the great ruler; so hell is the home of the wicked after death where the devil will be the great ruler.

While we are loath to admit it, we exalt the devil to the rank and position of a [god. On the one hand, is the God of all good, the "source of all light;" on the other hand, the god of all evil, the "prince of darkness." These two great forces are arrayed against each other. The world is a battle field upon which is waged the never ending battle between good and evil. This notion has so far pervaded the Christian social fabric, that life is commonly thought of as a battle. The spirit of antagonism, jealousy and hatred are the logical conditions that attend such a theory. We are taught to war against evil and to "do battle for the

Master." This strange theology was invented more than 2,000 years ago by ignorant and superstitious people. It is at variance with every science of nature and with the spirit of modern civilization. It is inconsistent with the spirit and teaching of Christian religion, and yet we cling to it as a drowning man to a straw.

The wrong and the evil in this world are largely the result of ignorance. Ignorance does not need to be conquered in a battle. It must be overcome by kindness and by teaching. It is a question of education and not a question of conquering. The wickedness, the ignorance and the misery that are caused in this world are not the result of an "evil spirit" walking to and fro in the land "seeking whom he may devour." Our educators of today do not believe or teach this. There is a better and higher conception of God and the universe. We live in a world controlled by the universal laws of God, in a universe in which worlds and systems of worlds exist and move under the same unerring laws. The Supreme Architect has organized, and day by day, year by year, century after century and age after age, supports and controls the entire universe. Under and through his laws,the earth and all things therein contained have reached their present state of being and development. Progress and development have marked the succeeding ages and today we are in the midst of that progress and development. As knowledge increases and approaches universality, so will our world approach perfection. It is not a question of battle or of war, but a question of growth, of development, of progress and of education. We cannot but feel a touch of the sublime in contemplating a Supreme Existence, the organizer and preserver of all things and in whom we live and move and have our being.

If we could but lay aside our childish preconceptions in regard to God and his workings; if we could but lay aside our prejudices, our fears and our superstitions, and take a survey of this great problem in the light of advanced knowledge and of the teachings of nature, and be willing to accept the truth wherever and in whatever form we find it, we would be on the road toward a better conception of God, and a more consistent theory of theology.

It is a peculiar fact that our Christian religion in the main, is far in advance of the motive and incentives held out by Christian leaders to induce people to accept and practice Christianity. So much of the teaching has to do with the hereafter and so little of it with this life; so much of it deals with arbitrary rewards and punishments which have no relation whatever to the acts to be rewarded or punished.

We are told that we should live right, because there is a hereafter; that after death there is to be a great criminal tribunal which shall sit in judgment upon the deeds of every human being; that the Mighty Judge will divide all souls into two classes, the good and the bad, the "sheep" and the "goats;" the good, he will exonerate and reward with eternal life at his right hand; the bad, he will convict and sentence to everlasting punishment. We are told that for the hope of this reward and for the fear of this punishment, we should strive to live right.

There are several strange things involved in this teaching. In the first place, hope and fear are put forward as the motives for right living. The time was when the school master governed his school by this same hope of reward and fear of punishment. With the young and the ignorant, who are not able to comprehend the great objects and value of an education, the hope of arbitrary rewards and fear of arbitrary punishments may be used with good effect, but to the pupil who comprehends the value of an education, how absurd to urge him to study from the hope of such rewards and the fear of such punishments. So it is with him who knows right from wrong, who comprehends the effects of his acts upon himself and others. Why should we live right? Because it is right, because of the respect we should have for ourselves, love for our fellowmen and piety towards God, and not because of a hope or fear of a reward or punishment hereafter that we do not merit.

In the second place, it is strange in this teaching, that both the reward we are urged to seek and the punishment we are urged to shun are arbitrary. The reward is not the result or consequence of our good acts, but is an arbitrary prize given us long after good acts and their consequences

have been forgotten. The punishment of an endless torment in the hereafter is not the consequences or result of any wrongful act committed by us here, but is an arbitrary cruelty administered long after the misdeed and its consequences have passed away and been forgotten forever.

In the third place, this strange teaching places the reward and punishment so far in the future. Not until we have completed this life with its trials and tribulations, its pleasures and pains, its joys and sorrows, its griefs and happiness—not until we have passed into the great unknown, are we supposed to receive this eternal reward or everlasting punishment which awaits all human souls.

And strangest of all, this teaching which had its origin in the infantile age of man when ignorance and superstition prevailed, is today promulgated and accepted by and among intelligent and civilized people, who know the fundamentals of right and wrong and that every act and deed has its direct effects, consequences and influence for good or bad, and that these are the rewards and punishments that are ever being meted out to us all.

In my judgment, the chief concern of humanity is the life we are now living. If we could get over the idea that our mission on earth is "to get to heaven," that this is only a "preparatory" state, and could come to realize that this life is the only one with which we are concerned at present, that we should live it for its own sake, we would be a long way on the road toward a better understanding of both the laws of God and the duties of man. This life should mean more than it does to the majority of people.

The most beautiful gems of Christian thought are not all the time citing us to the future life: (1) "Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." (2) "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another." (3) "Bless them that curse you; bless and curse not." (4) "All things therefore, whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them." (5) "By their fruits ye shall know them." (6) "But now abideth faith, hope and love, these three and the greatest of these is love." (7) "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." (8) "To

him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

These sublime thoughts are in harmony with the best principles of right that have come down to us from all the ages. They carry with them no reward or punishment but the natural and unavoidable consequences which follow our acts. What better reason do we need for doing right, than that it is right; what better reason for avoiding the wrong, than that it is wrong?

When we shall have lived this life up to the full measure of success, we will be prepared for the future with whatever it may have in store for us.

CHAPTER IV

THEOLOGY AND RELIGION

I have no mature or completed system of religion or theology which I am ready to ask my readers to accept as an answer to the many perplexing questions that confront us in our study of these most important subjects. Considering human imperfections, such a system would be impossible. There is, however, much that can be safely done toward surveying out our course and finding out our limitations in the matter of constructing a practical and progressive theology and religion.

Let the distinction between theology and religion first clearly appear:

Theology is the science of God. Broadly speaking, our theology is made up of our conceptions of God, including such ideas as we may have regarding his nature, attributes, will and laws, as the great Cause and Preserver of the universe. Religion is the attitude that man assumes toward God and man, and the relations he enters into with God, his fellowman and himself as a result of his notions of God and nature. Theology is an objective affair; we study God and his manifestations very much as we would study a great man and his deeds; but religion is a subjective affair; we have feelings of adoration toward God, sympathy for our fellowman and respect for ourselves; these move us to action, and we work out a religion, which is the outward manifestation of these subjective emotions and feelings.

The universe and all the laws and workings of nature, such as are manifested to us all the time, together with all that is unknown to us in nature, are but the handiwork and manifestations of God, the Infinite Cause and Architect of the universe; and our knowledge

must be taken into account in making up our theological notions and forming our conceptions of God. The amount and accuracy of this knowledge are today greater than ever before, and are continually increasing; and any system of theology or religion must, to be worthy of our consideration, be consistent with this knowledge—not only consistent with what we know now, but in the future must become consistent with what we shall from time to time find out. Since human wisdom is destined ever to approach but never reach perfection, so should our theological and religious conceptions ever approach but can never reach perfection. Then, it follows, that from the human view point, our theology and religion must be ever changing, ever progressing.

On the other hand, the Bible has been held up as the complete and perfect theological and religious guide for us heretofore, now and for all time to come, as containing the absolute and ultimate truth concerning the existence, character, attributes and laws of God, his will toward man and the relations and duties of man to God, to his fellowman and to himself. If the Bible contains the ultimate facts on these subjects, then there can be no such thing as progress in theological thought, no such thing as a higher conception of God, no such thing as a higher conception of our duties to God and our fellowman, for the Bible is before us and it contains the last word on these important subjects. The very latest teachings which this Bible brings us are supposed to be nearly nineteen hundred years old, and are in part the theology and religion of the ancient Jewish nation, and, in part, that of the Christians of the 1st and 2nd century A. D. The Bible is in substance the theology and religion of the respective ages in which its several parts were written and consistent with the knowledge of God through nature during those ages. Our present knowledge of nature is more than 1800 years in advance of this. Those who hold to the belief in an absolute Bible, are trying to make a modern civilization fit an ancient theology and religion. Every little while we see the heroic efforts of some man to harmonize modern science with the Bible. Often strained and far-fetched interpretations are placed on Bible pas-

sages with a view to making them consistent with the accepted facts of modern science. This would not be the case if the progress in our religion and theology had not been stopped by the belief in an absolute Bible.

Consider for a moment some of the unreasonable and unjust things taught in our Bible:

(1) It is inconsistent with modern notions of justice, that God should have condemned Adam, together with all his posterity, to death for disobeying an order of God; it being admitted, that, at the time of the disobedience, Adam did not know "good and evil."

(2) It is inconsistent with our conception of an all-wise and just God, that he, after having created mankind, should for any cause or upon any pretense so "repent" of having made man as wilfully to destroy the whole human race (except eight persons) by a great flood of waters.

(3) It is impossible for modern thought to comprehend the justice of the act of God in killing the first-born of every family of the whole of Egypt, because Pharaoh had refused to release from bondage the children of Israel. The act would not appear to us so cruel and wanton, if he had killed Pharaoh only; but to kill innocent men, women and children for the offense of one man, and at the same time let that man escape, cannot be considered by us as the act of a just God.

(4) Jesus is said to have been in the beginning with God, himself a God, the one through whom all things were created, that he was the son of God, that just prior to the beginning of the Christian era he came to earth, was begotten by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, was born, lived on earth as a man for about 33½ years; that his mission to earth was to save the world by being offered as a sacrifice for the sins of mankind. There are many things about this strange history that modern thought cannot understand; The word "son" carries with it the notion of being begotten and born, the word "God" carries with it the idea of the Infinite and uncreated Cause and Supporter of the universe. Therefore the idea of a God being the son of a God is a contradiction. The word "son" also carries with it the idea of mother as well as father. Who was the

mother of the son of God before he came to earth? Again, it is not only inconsistent but repugnant to both our morals and intelligence to imagine a God being begotten or generated through the instrumentality of another God and being born of a woman as a human infant. Yet, this is exactly the inconsistency which confronts us in the supposed immalculate conception of Jesus.

(5) The offering of a human sacrifice as an atonement for the sins of others has no place in modern thought. Sins may be forgiven or the wrong-doer may suffer the penalty of his act; but sin is not a debt that can be settled for us by others.

(6) "He that believeth (the gospel) and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned." This passage is presumably one of the interpolations; it is not found in the oldest manuscripts of Mark, but it was included as a part of the canonical scriptures and has for centuries been preached to mankind as the true teaching of Jesus. The principle set forth in this quotation is vicious. One may justly be condemned for having done something bad, but he cannot be justly condemned for refusing to accept some particular religious or theological doctrine or creed.

These are some of the things that lead me to the unavoidable conclusion, that the Bible is not a safe moral guide in all things, and that it is not infallible upon theological and religious questions.

Yet, with all this load of inconsistent and unreasonable things, the Christian religion, in one form or another, has for a long time been the ruling moral force in many of the civilized nations of the earth. This may seem strange, but it is easily understood when we investigate further:

While Jesus accepted the theology of his ancestors and worshipped the God of His fathers, he broke away from the Jewish conceptions of the duties and relations between man and man. He denounced the selfishness of the Jewish religion in matters of duty toward others; herein lies the great difference between the teachings of Jesus and the teachings of "the law." Modern civilization and thought have not improved upon the following beautiful sentiments and teachings of the Christian religion:

(1) "Pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this, to visit the widows and fatherless in their affliction, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world."

(2) "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

(3) "By their fruits ye shall know them."

(4) "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them."

(5) "Neither do I condemn thee; go thy way; from henceforth sin no more."

This last quotation is another one of those interpolations, put into the Bible probably by copyists, and not found in the older manuscripts; yet, it is a beautiful thought and expresses that kindness of heart which appeals to everyone who looks with sympathy upon the unfortunate.

These are all sentiments and thoughts that will live forever and are worthy of the place they have held so long in the foremost religion of the civilized world. They are not creeds, nor doctrines, nor articles of faith; yet they are today the life-blood of the Christian religion.

It is proper to note here that these quotations refer all the time to one's duty to his fellowman or to himself. So long as the Christian religion contents itself with defining man's duty to himself and his fellowman, it is most excellent; but when it undertakes to point out man's duty to God, it is sometimes unreasonable and vicious.

In conclusion, let us summarize the thoughts that we have tried to bring out:

(1) Our theology is our conception of God and the universe considered as the work of God.

(2) Our religion is the duties we assume and try to work out as the result of our theology.

(3) Our theology and our religion must conform to what we know of God and nature, including humanity.

(4) Our theology and religion will approach perfection only as we come to know the truth.

(5) The Bible is not an absolute and infallible guide to us either in matters of theology or religion.

(6) Christianity is weak on matters of theology, but strong on matters of practical religion.

CHAPTER V

IS THE BIBLE INFALLIBLE

At the very threshold of our investigations of the subject of Christian theology, we are met with the contention on the part of orthodox Christian people, that the Bible is infallible. This contention is variously expressed in such language as the following:

"Study the Holy Scriptures. Therein are contained the words of eternal life. They have God for their author, salvation for their end, and truth without mixture of error for their matter."—From the preface to Holman's Edition of the Holy Bible.

In order for the Bible to be infallible, two conditions must have been fulfilled: (1) The author must have been God, and (2) From the time it was first written to the present time, it must have been preserved in its original purity. Neither of these conditions can be proven to have existed. On the contrary, there is much evidence that neither condition ever did exist.

It is not the purpose of this work to make exhaustive investigations, but rather to give the reader the benefit of investigations already made. There is enough of undisputed evidence, if properly brought together and considered, to prove a very different state of affairs from that which the majority of us have been taught from infancy to believe.

Even a superficial examination of the make-up of the Old Testament, together with its historical setting, shows conclusively that it is a compilation of the literature of one of the ancient nations; that, at the time of the making of the Old Testament; that nation was in its age of childlike simplicity so far as its intellectual development and beliefs were concerned, and that the undeveloped and un-

learned condition of the people, their low standard of morals, their superstitions and their lack of civilization, are all elements which enter into and make up the thought and animus of the writings which we so considerately speak of as the "Word of God."

Who were the Hebrews and what part have they played in the history of the world? As we are informed by our historians, they were not the most ancient, the most populous, nor the most prosperous of the ancient nations. The tradition of the Hebrews seems to have been that Abram, the patriarchal progenitor of the Hebrews, came out of "Ur of the Chaldees." As a people or tribe they were Semites and an off-shot from those ancient peoples who had for thousands of years before the time of the Hebrews, inhabited the fertile valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers.

Abram, after he had married, went from his native land over to the land of Canaan. Soon afterwards, there was a "famine" in that country, and Abram went down into Egypt, where he remained for some time. Later he returned to Canaan and established his permanent home there. He had accumulated large flocks and was considered wealthy. He gained considerable renown as a warrior in his battle with Chedorlaomar, and "found favor" with the King of Salem, Melchizedek. I do not know when or how he acquired the name "Hebrew". It seems that just before this battle he was known as "Abram, the Hebrew."—Gen. 14:13. Abram died in Canaan, and his posterity lived there for about three generations; but again on account of a "famine" they all removed to Egypt. They were prosperous for a time, but later they were thrown into bondage. After a long period of servitude, they were liberated and started on their return to Canaan.

After many years of wandering about in the "wilderness," they finally arrived within their native country again, only to find it possessed by others. After a series of wars, or rather a period of warfare, lasting over many years, they succeeded in establishing themselves again in the land of Canaan. This period of strife and warfare is known as the rule of the Judges. Samuel, the last Judge, was instrumental in the selection of Saul as the first king. Following him, David,

Solomon and Rehoboam came to the throne in succession.

Solomon had in some ways been a successful king, but his heavy taxes had been a great burden to the people. The temple of Solomon was magnificent, but the people groaned under the burden of extravagance. They petitioned his son, Rehoboam, to lighten their burden of taxation, but he would not. A division of the kingdom was the result. The tribes of Judah and Benjamin remained in the south in and around Jerusalem, and the other ten tribes moved to the north and established a new kingdom under the name of "Israel," whose new king was Jeroboam. The southern kingdom retained Rehoboam as its king and was known by the name of the kingdom of "Judah."

Thus divided, each kingdom was easy prey to its stronger neighbors. About 722 B. C., Israel was conquered by the Assyrians; and about 586 B. C., Judah was conquered and subdued by the Babylonians, when King Solomon's Temple was destroyed. No part of the Hebrew people ever maintained an independent national existence afterwards. They had governmental existence only as provinces of such nations as successively maintained supremacy over western Asia. The last nation to rule over them was the Romans who finally laid waste Jerusalem and dispersed the Jews. This was about 70 A. D.

Like all other ancient peoples, the Hebrews were childlike in their theological conceptions, and were very religious and superstitious. From the start they were fully imbued with the idea that God had no other business half so important as to look after their particular wants and welfare. They start the history of Abram as follows:

"Now Jehovah said unto Abram, get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will show thee; I will make thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and be thou a blessing; I will bless them that bless thee, and him that curseth thee, will I curse; and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed."—Gen. 12:1-3.

From this time on throughout the entire history of the Hebrew people down to the time when the city of Jerusalem was laid waste by the Romans and the Jews were

driven to different lands, they assumed to be always in direct and personal communication with God, through their prophets and inspired men. When they were successful in any undertaking of peace or war, that success was attributed to their being the "chosen people" of God and the fact, that his personal favors and blessings were resting on them. When they were unsuccessful in their undertakings in peace or war, they attributed their misfortune to the personal displeasure of God. Not only were their national fortunes and misfortunes under the immediate and personal control of their God, but the personal acts, deeds, fortunes and misfortunes of the individuals were also directed and controlled by the pleasures and displeasures of their God.

The establishment of the kingdom of Saul among the Hebrews was presumably about 1050 B. C. So far as is known none of the Old Testament was written at that time. The indications are that parts of Proverbs were written about 900 B. C., and were probably the first writings which were afterwards incorporated into the present Bible. The newest or latest writings that enter into the make-up of the Old Testament were probably the Book of Daniel, parts of the Psalms and the book of Esther and were completed some time about 175 to 150 B. C. Thus the period within which the Old Testament was written covers about 700 or 800 years of the time extending from about 100 years after the building of King Solomon's Temple down to within 150 years of the Christian era.

The composition and make-up of the Old Testament is very complex. It is composed of parts called books, and the subject matter covers a great many different types of literature:

(a) In the first place, it gives the details (at times very minute and at times very indefinite) of the history of the Hebrew people, including many features that are proper subjects of historical record, besides many frivolous and minute details that are not worthy of space in a history. Many of the stories which attempt to relate actual circumstances and events are but the simple imaginations of the inexperienced and superstitious people.

(b) Deuteronomy and Joshua (which our Bible scholars

tell us are one and the same production and that the division into two books is a mechanical separation without difference of subject matter) were the law books or statute books of the Hebrews. The different laws found therein were enacted at different times, stretching over a long period of the history of the nation. Some of them are in conflict with each other, by reason of having been enacted at different times and under different conditions and by reason of the failure to repeal such laws as became obsolete. Some of these laws were excellent for their time; some of them were foolish and of no value; others were vicious.

(c) In addition to the history and the laws found in the Bible, there is considerable poetry. Some of the songs and other poems are probably very ancient and existed among the people long before they were committed to writing. The principal poetry of the Old Testament is included in Proverbs, Psalms, Lamentations, Job, Canticles and Ecclesiastes. The superstitious and imaginative condition and temperament of the people furnished a somewhat fertile field for the development of poetry, and poetic strains are found in many places in the Bible.

(d) In addition to the theological tone throughout the entire Old Testament, we have the writings of various individuals, whose writings purport to be inspired. They call themselves "prophets," who pretended to write down the Divine Will to their people through miraculous inspiration.

Thus, we find the Bible to be a volume containing all kinds of literature. Its range is from the most frivolous and childish stories to personal conversations with angels and with God himself. Private and personal difficulties between individuals, domestic troubles and infelicities, as well as the planning of battles and crowning of Kings, enter into the make-up of this strange book.

Why should this be called the "Word of God" any more than the literature of our nation and time, or the literature of any other nation? Is it reasonable that the Great Creator would select the Hebrew nation as the medium of the revelation of his will to all nations and for all times? Why should the Hebrews have been selected in preference to the Babylonians or the other ancient peoples, who had for thou-

sands of years inhabited the valleys of theTigris andEuphrates, or in preference to those most ancient,and at that time,probably the best civilized of all nations, the Egyptians,who inhabited the fertile valley of the Nile? According to the Old Testament, while the Hebrews were under the constant and personal care of Jehovah and were almost daily receiving communications and revelations from him, all of the rest of the people on earth were denied the privilege of his personal care and guidance.

Upon the question of authorship and inspiration of the New Testment, let us make a brief study of the so-called Synoptic gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke.

Nothing is definitely known as to the authorship of these books.

There is not a hint in the texts as to who the authors were. The headings are, "The Gospel according to Saint Matthew," "The Gospel according to Saint Luke" and "The Gospel according to Saint Mark." This indicates that these books were compiled by some one or more persons, who gathered together the teachings of these Saints. The books undertake to give not only a report of what Jesus said and did, but in a great measure the exact language and acts of Jesus. Mark, the oldest of the gospels,was written probably 40 years after the death of Jesus. Prof. Benjamin W. Bacon, in his work, "The Beginnings of Gospel Story," says "As it is, Mark must be dated about 70-75 A. D., and Matthew but a few years later."—Intro. p. 33. Now, if the verbatim report were only a phrase or a sentence, one who heard it might have remembered it a lifetime; but in the absence of stenography and readings from prepared manuscripts, it is impossible that anyone hearing them only once, could remember whole discourses for even a day, not to say 40 years.

Someone is ready to contend, "But these writers were inspired to speak the exact truth, and the hand of God has preserved and handed it down absolutely unchanged." The evidence does not support this contention. In the first place these writers do not report the same circumstances the same; in the second place, the several existing manuscripts of these books do not agree, showing that changes and interpolations have been made. If the contention

were true, the three synoptic gospels, at least, should agree perfectly throughout on questions of fact; but they do not.

Take for example, the following quotations:

"The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that cause stumbling and them that do iniquity, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." Mt. 12:41-2.

"And He (Jesus) said unto them, Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned."—Mark 16:15-16.

Why is the first quotation found only in Matthew and the second found only in Mark?

Mark and Luke report the same occasions and some of the parables supposed to have been given by Jesus at the time Matthew reports Him to have used the language of the first quotation, but neither of them reports that quotation or the parable which that quotation in part explains. If the authors of Mark and Luke were inspired to know the exact words of Jesus, why did they omit this important warning? Again, the authors of Matthew and Luke both give an extended account of the birth and resurrection of Jesus. The author of Mark does not even allude to his birth, and in the oldest Greek manuscript of Mark, now in existence, his resurrection and acts after his resurrection are all omitted. Is it not strange that all this most important part of his biography should be omitted by one inspired to testify to these very things? The Bible nowhere states that these writers were supernaturally inspired, and there seems to be absolutely no evidence to support the claim.

The following quotation, coming, as it does, from so eminent an authority as Rev. Edward A. Abbott, D. D., Head Master City of London schools, Author of "Cambridge Sermons, etc., is worthy of our careful consideration:

"Coming to more general evidence, we find that (1) Mark at least, in many passages, includes the original tradition from which both Matthew and Luke borrowed; (2) his language less polished than that of Matthew and Luke, appears more natural for an earlier gospel in the first and rud-

est age of the church; (3) Mark's version of the tradition contains many expressions which might naturally be considered as "stumbling blocks" and which, in fact were rejected or not inserted in the other gospels; (4) the omission of all accounts of the manifestations of Jesus after the resurrection indicates a very early date, and though it may be said that this omission arises from the fact that the gospel was accidentally left incomplete, yet this answer will not account for the omission of the genealogies and all account of the birth and infancy of Jesus; (5) The interpolated appendix describing the resurrection of Jesus, quoted as it is by Irenaeus, shows that even in the time of Irenaeus, (170 A. D.) the gospel had been long enough in use to admit of wide spread interpolations."—Encyclopedea Britannica, Vol. X, p. 723.

Think of it: Matthew, Mark and Luke all contain passages "borrowed" from "tradition"! Mark's language lacks "polish" and represents the "first and rudest age of the Church!" Mark's "version of the tradition" contains many "stumbling blocks!" Mark forgot to say anything about the "genealogies," or the "birth, infancy or resurrection" of Jesus! With all these infirmaties, can it be that the authors of Matthew, Mark and Luke were "inspired" or that these books are infallible?

The "interpolated appendix" to Mark above referred to, consists of the last twelve verses of the sixteenth chapter of the book of Mark in its present form. The oldest Greek manuscripts now in existence do not contain verses 9 to 20, inclusive. This appendix contains the quotation given above from Mark. This quotation is not found in Matthew or Luke and is spurious. We are glad that it is, for we would hate to believe that any one should "be damned" for his beliefs. We cannot all believe the same things, it is not our nature to do so, and God does not condemn us for honest beliefs.

But returning to our subject, the evidence does not support the theory that God is the author of the Bible. It looks more like the work of man.

Even if the Bible had, in the first instance, been the word of God, and had in the beginning been infallible, it

could not now, after being for thousands of years in human hands, be considered infallible.

Let us briefly scan the history of our Bible:

There are three sources from which our Bible has been translated and corrected:

(1) Greek manuscripts. (2) Old translations of the Bible in other languages, principally the Syriac and the Latin. These translations are called "Versions." (3) Writings of the ancient Christian fathers, in which writings, quotations are made from early manuscripts of the books of the Bible.

Of these, the Greek manuscripts are first in importance. The oldest now in existence are the Vatican Codex and the Sinaitic Codex. There is some discussion as to which is the older, but it seems pretty certain that neither was written earlier than about the beginning of the 4th century A. D. Probably the Vatican Codex is the oldest manuscript of the Bible in existence. This manuscript has lain in the Vatican library at Rome at least 400 or 500 years. For many years, the Pope had it carefully guarded, and protestants and foreigners were scarcely permitted to see it. Later facsimilies were made by order of Pope Pius IX, and the world has for some time been in this way permitted to study this valuable manuscript. It consists of about 700 pages of leather, bound together in book-form. The pages are about one foot square and contain three columns to the page. Some parts of the text are gone, to-wit: Genesis 1-46, Psalms 105-127, and all of the New Testament after Hebrews 9:14. This manuscript is, of course, under control of the Roman Catholic Church.

The Sinaitic Codex seems about equal to the Vatican Codex in age; in fact, there is some difference of opinion among textual critics as to which of the two is the older. However, of more than 1500 different Greek manuscripts, the Sinaitic was about the last to be given to the world. Dr. Tischendorf, a great German scholar, discovered this manuscript in St. Catherine's Convent at the foot of Mt. Sinai. After considerable delay, he obtained possession of it under a promise that he would present it to Emperor Alexander at St. Petersburg. This manuscript was delivered

to Dr. Tischendorf at Cairo on Sept. 28, 1859, and was by him delivered at St. Petersburg about November 1, 1859. This manuscript was published in 1862 and has since been accessible to the students of the Bible. This manuscript is also of leather, pages about 15 inches by 13½ inches and contains four columns of 48 lines each. Tischendorf says, that at least, four different copyists were employed in making this manuscript, one of whom wrote nearly all of the New Testament. This Codex is in the possession of the Greek church at St. Petersburg.

The second source of our present Bible is the versions or translations that have been made from the Greek and Hebrew. The original of the Old Testament is supposed to have been written in Hebrew. The original of the New Testament is supposed to have been written in Greek. At the beginning of the Christian Era,the Jews were familiar with the Greek language and for some years after in Europe and Asia Minor the Greek language was the common language and understood by nearly every one.

The Bible was translated into several different languages, among which are the Syriac, the Arabic, the Gothic, the Armenian and the Latin.

We have no certain information as to the oldest Latin version. It was probably made in North Africa, because as has been said, for a long time after the dawn of the Christian Era the people of Rome and that part of Europe and Asia where Christian movement was prominent, were familiar with the Greek language. The oldest Latin translation was probably made in Africa some time about the close of the second Century. The number of different Latin versions or translations became so great that by the end of the Fourth Century there were a great many errors found, and many differences among the various texts.

About the year 382 Eusebius Hieronymous, better known as St. Jerome, visited Rome and attended a synod, and at the request of Pope Damascus began the critical labor of revising or preparing a corrected edition from the Latin versions. It was not long until he had completed a revision of the New Testament, but it took him much longer to complete the Old Testament. We are told that he compared his

New Testament revision with the old Greek manuscripts and prepared his translation of the Old Testament largely from the Hebrew.

There are many interesting incidents told of the manner in which this translation was received. It is related that an African Bishop who was in favor of the new version had ordered the section on Jonah's gourd to be read from it to the Church. Jerome had changed 'gourd' to 'ivy'; and this change having announced to the people the advent of a new translation, they raised such a tumult that the bishop was obliged to abandon his attempt. Even Augustine could not part with the old translation, and looked apprehensively upon the labors of the bold and by no means conciliatory scholar.

This version prepared by St. Jerome finally came to be called the Vulgate. It gradually grew in favor from the sixth to the eighth century and during the reign of Charlemagne the text of the Vulgate on account of being handed down through copies made by hand, became much corrupted and, in order to prevent further corruption of the text, this Monarch issued a Capitulary in 789, warning against the corruption of religious books and directed that the Gospel, the Psalter and the Missal should be written with all diligence by men of mature age."

The process of corruption, however, still continued and in 1089 the Bishop of Canterbury with great labor prepared a revision of the Vulgate edition of the Old and the New Testament and this revision continued until the time of printing, about 1456. In 1545, the Council of Trent met and in April, 1546, passed various decrees relating to the Scriptures.

The first decree determines what books of the Bible are to be regarded as canonical. The second reads in part as follows: "Moreover the same Holy Synod, considering that no little advantage can accrue to the Church of God, if, of all the Latin editions of the sacred books which are in circulation, it be made known which is to be esteemed as authentic, determines and declares that this ancient and Vulgate edition, which has been approved by the long use of so many ages in the Church itself, should be esteemed as

authentic in public readings, disputations, preachings, and expositions, and that no one may dare or presume to reject it on any pretext whatever."

One of the decrees passed at this session provides a strict regulation for the publication of the Sacred Scriptures, and winds up with this edict: "And it shall not be allowable for anyone to print or cause to be printed any books whatever upon sacred subjects without the name of the author, nor to sell them in future, or even to keep them, unless they have been first examined and approved by the Ordinary, under pain of anathema."

At the time of and following the meeting of the Council of Trent, the Bible of the Christian world was the various Latin Versions or rather the various editions of the Latin Vulgate. The people had no access to the ancient Greek manuscripts, which have already been described. The English people sought an English version or translation of the Bible. This was obtained from the Latin by Wyckliffe and later by Tyndale. Each of these men prepared an English version of the Bible. Following this, were published in 1537, what is know as "Matthew's Bible"; in 1539, the "Great Bible"; in 1560, the "Genevan Bible"; in 1568, the "Bishop's Bible"; all English versions were taken largely from Tyndales' version which had been prepared from the Latin.

In 1604, a conference of Bishops and Clergy was called and presided over by King James himself. The object of this conference was to consider the question of a more accurate and thorough translation of the Bible. The work was completed in 1611, and is known as the King James translation or the Authorized Version. This Authorized Version is the text of the Bible with which we are all familiar. It has been the authentic Bible for more than 300 years. During this time, the two ancient Greek manuscripts, already described, have been placed in the hands of Bible students. During this same time the English language has undergone many changes. These and other conditions have rendered a revision of the Bible necessary. This work was accomplished by a commission composed of English, American and other Bible scholars, during the time from 1881 to 1885. The result of their work is called

the Revised Version, and has now been in the hands of the people since 1885.

The American division of this commission retained its organization and continued work upon the Bible and in 1901 brought out what is known as the American Standard Version, published by Nelson & Sons of New York. This, in my judgment, is the most carefully prepared revision and translation of the Bible that has ever been made. The quotations from the Bible found in this book, are taken from the American Standard Version, unless otherwise specially stated.

It will be noted that from time of the the preparation of the Latin Vulgate by St. Jerome down to 1881, our Bible has practically come from Latin translations, but the last two versions, the Revised Version and the American Standard Version, have been prepared by the best Bible scholars of all times, with the most and best material that has ever been used in the preparation of a Bible text.

I have neglected to say anything about other ancient translations than the Latin, for the reason that they have not had much to do with the evolution of our Bible.

The writings of the Christian Fathers have been valuable mainly as evidence of the authenticity and accuracy of the various Greek and Latin manuscripts used in translating the Bible.

After examining this brief history of the Bible, is anyone prepared to say that it is infallible? Counting from the time when the last books of the Bible were first written, down to the time of the invention of printing, a space of more than 1200 years, every single copy was made by hand. Copyists were human beings. Suppose them all to have been honest (which is a violent supposition); they were all subject to errors. Many errors, erasures and interpolations have been discovered. Can anyone guess how many have never been discovered?

Our Bible was originally written by men, some of them wise and some otherwise. It has been transmitted down through the hundreds of generations under conditions that were not always conducive to accuracy. Some of the thoughts

and teachings found in the Bible are good, pure and righteous, some are not. I know of no better rule to use in examining the Bible than the one, it gives: "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."

CHAPTER VI

GOD

Much has been said about the utter hopelessness of the man who does not accept as infallible and inspired the teachings of the Bible. He is criticized for his lack of faith; he is censured for his boldness in presuming to question the truth of so sacred a book; and he is pitied for his ignorance, his lack of hope of future happiness and his certainty of eternal punishment.

In the light of the present developments in science and knowledge, what is the position—the faith and the hopes—of the man who does not accept the teachings of orthodox Christianity as correct or the Bible as being infallible?

As I have before explained, I have no new theology to promulgate or new religion to establish. I am in search of the truth wherever I can find it, and will accept it whereever I recognize it.

There are many of us who have for a long time been dissatisfied with the old order of things—with the many contradictions and absurdities of our former theological and religious teachings and faith; but in the absence of something more satisfactory, more consistent, more plausible, more definite, we have hesitated to start out in the field of investigation for ourselves. Actually fearing to trust our own judgment, the only moral guide we have, and being frightened at the tendencies of our own thought, we have recoiled from the conclusions we were about to reach. But it is not exactly the brave thing to do, to shrink from this task. It is not wrong for us to follow our own best judgment. It is not wrong for us to investigate for ourselves and reach conclusions of our own, provided we are not dogmatic and do not object to every other person's doing the same thing.

There are many final truths that we can never find, yet there are many that we can understand. And in my judgment it is the duty of every man to spend at least some time considering these questions, to inform himself of the proven facts and accepted theories and to investigate for himself and develop his own conception if possible, of God and of the universe.

An infinity is that whose limits are inconceivable. In mathematics we have a great variety of infinities, but in nature there are probably not so many. The great infinities which appear to us in the make up of the universe are duration (more commonly called time), space, matter, force and God.

While we cannot comprehend the limits of an infinity, we may have some conception of the infinity itself. We understand that all things existed in time, that without time, there could be no existence, yet we cannot conceive the absence of time or duration. We may imagine ourselves as far as possible in the infinite past, but we cannot conceive the beginning of time. We may imagine ourselves as far as possible in the infinite future, we can never conceive a future where time would cease to exist. Some imagine that the beginning of all things came about as described in the first chapter of Genesis. But when, in your imagination, you place yourself there, you cannot think but that time existed infinitely back of that. You cannot imagine the beginning of time. You cannot imagine the existence of anything prior to the existence of time, neither can you imagine the end of time, nor the existence of anything beyond or without the existence of time. Time or rather duration, is an infinity.

Space is one of the infinities. You may imagine yourself as far as you can in any particular direction, but there you would be just as far from the limits of space as you are now. Space is limitless. Time and space are the two great infinities within which all things exist. Without time and space, an existence is impossible.

If philosophers tell us the truth, matter is infinite. We are told that matter is indestructible. If matter is indestructible and cannot cease to exist, then we cannot

imagine the time when matter did not exist. The form and composition of matter is changed into thousands of different physical structures, which we may observe, but in all this composition, this dissolution and re-organization of matter, not one particle is lost, nor one new particle is created; all is simply changed. This composition and re-organization presents all the phenomena of matter that we can and do observe. Matter itself is a constant quantity, has existed from the eternal past and will continue to exist throughout the eternal future.

Force is infinite. Scientists have demonstrated that force is neither lost nor created. Like matter it exists in various forms, and appears to change from one form to another. But force itself is never lost; neither can we conceive that it was ever created from nothing or from something that was not force. We cannot imagine a time when force did not exist, neither can we imagine a time when force will cease to exist. This test classes force as one of the infinities. Some discussion has arisen as to whether force is an independent entity or whether it is a property of matter. From some viewpoints, it would seem that force is only a property or a constituent of matter. It is true, that we never observe force separate from matter, and we cannot imagine such a condition. We are taught that throughout all the universe, so far as is known, all the manifestations and conditions are the result of the inter-actions of force and matter, but whether they are different aspects of the same entity or are independent entities is, to our mind, an open question.

Science further teaches that, throughout the various and varying inter-actions of matter and force, things are continually changing, continually improving, continually growing better. The geologist tells us that the time was when there was no living thing on the earth and neither were the conditions such that any living thing could exist; but by the gradual changing of conditions they became tolerable to vegetable life. Conditions continued to improve and animal and vegetable life appeared. These first forms of life both vegetable and animal, were simple in their structure and organization. As conditions improved,

the structure and organization of this life improved. Change after change has followed down through the countless ages to the present time, to the present systematized and complex structure of thousands of species of both vegetables and animals, to the present structure and condition of our earth. It would seem that the process of creation has been in operation down through the ages and is still operating. There is no suggestion anywhere in nature that this continually changing development will ever cease.

We should note, that in a general way all this changing has been toward system, order, development, improvement. Whether this tendency to ever evolve something better is simply an innate tendency of force and matter to adjust themselves properly to the changing conditions which their own activities create or is produced and guided by a power from without is the greatest metaphysical problem, which may never be solved. If there is such a power aside from matter and force, it is also an infinity; for that tendency comes from a power, whether within matter and force or from without, which is the organizing and systematizing power of the whole universe. It is that power which has from the infinite past, directed and is today directing all activities. It is that same power which will continue to direct all activities of the universe until time shall be no more. This power, whether inherent in matter or force or either, or an independent entity, is an infinity, the presiding, controlling and directing infinity of the universe. The system, the harmony, the beauty and the usefulness of everything in the universe from the smallest microscopic organism to the great worlds and systems of worlds, that are revealed to us through the most powerful telescope, are due to the existence of this power. It is the power without which all would be chaos. It is that power without which no organism or organization could exist for a single moment. That power is GOD. Any human effort to describe or define God is an effort to find out the bounds and limits to infinity. God is not a person, nor the image of a person; God is not an organized being after the type of man with hands, feet, face, eyes, ears, body and limbs. God is not a being with passions and prejudices, envy and jealousy, hatred, revenge,

pity and love; God is different from all these and above them all.

God never "formed a man out of the dust of the ground," and then by an action inconceivable and contrary to the laws of nature, changed this "dust of the ground" in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, into bone and muscle, nerve and brain. God never put Adam to sleep and took a rib from his side and from that rib made a human being, a woman.

God is the great directing force in nature; why should God who is the very antithesis of miracles, of innovations and breaks in the uniformity of nature, perform miracles? A miracle would prove the weakness rather than the power of God.

God is the author and the director of system, order and harmony, and is that power which from the infinite past down to the present has brought the universe to its present beauty, symmetry and organization. God is "that sublime intelligence which pervades all nature" and "does all things well."

CHAPTER VII

CONCERNING THE PERSONALITY OF GOD

In criticising the idea of a personal God, of miracles and of various other accepted features of Christian theology, I do so, not in the spirit of intolerance toward those who believe and advocate these things, but as one who is seeking the truth. I discard whatever appears to me to be without foundation in truth. I oppose the theology of the man who believes that God is a being with a form of which man is the "image," as I would oppose the theory of the man who should believe that the earth is flat. I may not have a very high estimate of his judgment, or may consider him careless and inaccurate in weighing evidence, but such opposition or variance of opinion between him and me is no grounds for questioning his honesty or motives. Every man has a perfect right to think as his best judgment dictates; in fact, it is his duty to do so. Therefore whatever criticisms I may make as to theological creeds and dogma, let it be understood, once for all, that it is the creed and not he who believes it, that is being criticized.

I have advanced certain notions regarding the nature, attributes and existence of God. These notions have been somewhat general and indefinite. For that reason, they may not be very satisfactory to some, as presenting a conception of God. Doubtless we would all like to know more than it will ever be possible for us to find out about this most sublime subject. Our search after the infinite can never meet with more than partial success. We know something of time, space, matter and force, but we can never know all about them. What we do know about them is probably sufficient for our needs, yet it does not satisfy our desire. We can and we do know something of God,

probably sufficient to satisfy our needs, but, as before, our desire for the truth leads us to continue our search.

We can neither help nor harm God, in an honest search for the truth. The conclusion we may reach, whether right or wrong, can in no way affect the nature, attributes or existence of God, nor the course of nature. Whether God is a personality sitting on a throne, or is an inherent constituent of force or matter or both, which systematizes and directs all nature, or is a great independent infinity pervading and controlling all the activities of the universe, does not in any way affect the result. We will continue to have life and death, joy and sorrow, sunshine and shadow, the gentle zephyrs and the stormy blasts, the seed time and the harvest; the earth will continue in her course about the sun and the sun will continue in his course through the heavens. And whatever we may find out or fail to find out about God, will not affect our relations and duties to our fellowman. So let us engage in this search after the truth with pleasure, with freedom and fairness, and not with preconceived notions that will bias our judgment in considering whatever evidence we may find. Let us lay aside that perpetual fear that our already formed notions of God will be shattered and that we will be forever lost. If our present notions are correct, they will stand the test; if not correct, they should be abandoned.

In considering the belief in the individual and personal existence of God, it is worth while to trace to some extent the origin and history of this belief, and the evolution that has taken place in the beliefs concerning God from the ancients down to the present time.

Christian theology is based upon Jewish theology, and the Jewish theology was a contemporary of Greek and Roman theology.

Jesus was a Jew and he never at any time repudiated the Jewish theology. In the sermon on the mount, He says, "Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I am come not to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished."—Mt. 4:17-18.

Orthodox Christians of today believe in the Hebrew

God, Jehovah, who "formed man of the dust of the ground," who gave to Moses the ten commandments, and who professed to him "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." Jehovah is identical with our Christian "God the Father Almighty" whose "only son" is Jesus.

Like the Jew, the orthodox Christian believes in angels, or messenger gods, who were sent on errands by Jehovah to all parts of the universe. Angels appeared to Hagar (Gen. 16:7), to Abraham (Gen. 18:12), to Lot (Gen. 19:1), to Daniel (Dan. 8:16), to Joshua (I Kings 1:3) and to other patriarchs and prophets. They also appeared to Joseph (Mat. 1:20), to Zacharias (Lk. 1:11), to Jesus (Lk. 22:43), and they form an integral part of Christian theology.

Whether the angels should be classed as Gods or not, I do not know. I do know that they are considered celestial beings and inhabitants of heaven. They occupy a place in Jewish and Christian theology somewhat similar to that of Hermes, the messenger god in Greek theology.

It is true that both Jews and Christians claim to believe in monotheism, or the existence of one God only; but we cannot reconcile monotheism with a system of theology providing for a God Almighty, a Son of God, archangels, angels, a "god of this world" (II Cor. 4:4), presumably the devil, and his angels (Mt. 25:41).

The fundamental error of these theologies is an attempt to give to a finite being infinite power and wisdom. Their Gods are personalities, beings limited in form and shape, organs and parts. In this respect then, they are finite. But they attempt to endow these finite personalities with infinite power and wisdom. This is irreconcilable. Such a god cannot be in distant places at the same time, because he is a personality, an individual. Therefore he can not be infinite in power, because the location of his existence is limited. This is the very reason, and the only reason, that these systems of theology provide for angels to carry messages and perform acts for the God, who by reason of his personality cannot be everywhere at the same time.

This personality of the Deity is common to all the ancient theologies or "mythologies," as we sometimes call them.

It is easy to understand how the ancients, ignorant,

as they were of nature and nature's laws, could only conceive of the great directing power in nature by personifying it, by considering it a being, or a number of beings, after their own type and likeness, but with greatly increased wisdom and power. As they looked out upon nature, they observed phenomena that they could not understand. These were beyond their comprehension. In an effort to reason from the effect back to the cause, they were acquainted with nothing greater, as a directing power, than man. From this, they proceeded to imagine a being after the type of man but with greater power and wisdom than they had known, to be the cause of all things. Thus, as has been said, man created God in his own image and after his own likeness.

The idea of many gods grew as a natural result out of this conception of a personal God. The ancients could not conceive the same personal being as causing sunshine and storm, love and hatred, peace and war, or other apparently conflicting conditions in nature, as happening at the same time. A very natural explanation for these varying conditions was developed as follows:

The Greeks and Romans had their god Zeus or Jupiter, who was the greatest of the gods. He presided over and in a general way controlled the acts and deeds of all the other gods. However, many times the lesser gods would slip away from his presence and do things contrary to his will. This produced a conflict in nature, and was the ingenious explanation given by the ancients for these conflicts.

In our Christian theology, the appearance of Jesus as God may be explained in this way: Jehovah had created Adam pure and innocent (but not perfect). Adam was tempted by Satan and fell. In this, Satan thwarted the plans of Jehovah, very much as Hera and some of the other gods used to thwart the schemes of Zeus.

Since man had fallen, it became necessary to provide some sort of opportunity for his redemption. Redemption under Jewish theology depended upon faith in a redeemer yet to come. However, Christian theology rose to the emergency and supplied that Savior or Redeemer in Jesus as the Son of God.

Thus it is, that the appearance of Jesus as a god was

the result of the Jewish belief in the fall of man; and this belief in the fall of man was made possible by the belief in the personal and individual nature of Jehovah. Satan tempted Adam in the absence of Jehovah. The fall of Adam would not have been attempted and could not have been accomplished in His presence.

CHAPTER VIII

WAS JESUS GOD

There are many reasons why I do not believe that Jesus was God. But before attempting a detailed presentation of these reasons, let us examine the genealogy of Jesus as given in the New Testament and see if we can find out what it means, or what object the author could have had in giving it as therein found.

What is the purport of the first 16 verses of the gospel according to Matthew? Why were these verses written? The first verse reads, "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." A foot-note in the American Standard Version says that "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ" may be also translated "The genealogy of Jesus Christ."

It is common for the Christian preachers of today to explain the promise of God to Abraham "And in thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 22:18), to mean that Jesus Christ was that "seed" in which all nations of the earth should be blessed; and, in support thereof, to quote such passages as, "Now unto Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his seed. He saith not, and to seeds, as of many; but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ."—Gal. 3:16.

The author of Matthew, going upon the theory of the immaculate conception of Jesus, is bound to concede that if Jesus was of the "seed" of Abraham, such relationship would have to be established through Mary and not through Joseph. Yet, in the face of this very fact, he proceeds to call Jesus the "son of Abraham" and then follows the line of descent from Abraham to Joseph, "the husband of Mary of whom was born Jesus."

I see no other object of these 16 verses than to attempt to prove that Jesus descended from Abraham; in fact, that is the avowed purpose, to set forth the "book of the generation of Jesus Christ." But does anyone think for a moment that this genealogy leads to Jesus? Do we from this know anything more of the ancestry of Jesus, than that he was the son of Mary. We have nothing whatever of her ancestry given here or anywhere else so far as I know. If the author wanted to show that Jesus was of the "seed"of Abraham, why did he not trace the ancestry of Mary? It would certainly be as easy for an "inspired" writer to trace her ancestry as to trace that of Joseph, and it certainly would have been in point to do so.

One can hardly conceive of a more puerile or absurd effort than this, to establish the ancestry of Jesus in Abraham; yet, that is the best and, in connection with a similar effort in Luke 3:23-37, the only ground for the statement that Jesus was and is the fulfillment of the promise of God to Abraham, that "in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."

My first reason for believing that Jesus was not God is founded upon the fundamental belief that there is but one God and that God is not a person. If these propositions, or either of them, are true, Jesus could not have been God.

Christian people generally claim to believe in the existence of only one God. At the same time, they insist that Jesus was the son of that God. In fact, they believe in what they call a "God-Head," consisting of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost, and that these three existences or beings compose the one God. Yet, they give to each of these three beings the attributes of independent self-existence. It will not be claimed that God the Father Almighty and Jesus who lived on earth thirty-three years were one and the same being, but separate beings; for Jesus was "sent" to this world by the Father for a specific purpose. My contention is, that there is but one God. All this talk about the "God-Head" composed of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost is absurd, and there is no room or place for Jesus as a second god. My conception of God

is not that he is an individual or person, who sits up in a so-called heaven and controls the universe by the word of his power or by any sort of omnipotent magic or miraculous fiat. God is the great systematic and systematizing force element of the universe, in whom we live, move and have our being. God is not the father of any one in the literal sense of that term; God never "sent" any one into this world to save it; God never has had an "only begotten Son;" God has no such associate as the Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit spoken of in the Bible. I cannot think of Jesus as the Son of God, the Son of the Holy Ghost, or of any other superhuman being.

Again, my conception of God is that he is an infinity, that he has, like matter, time and space, existed from all eternity. This conception of God will not allow me to say or think that there can be such a thing as a god, who has been begotten or who is the son of another god. The proposition is equally absurd, whether we consider the beginning of the existence of Jesus to have been at the time of his conception as the son of Mary, or at some time and place in "heaven," prior to the time of his coming to earth. We read:

"For God sent not the Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through him."—Jn. 1:17.

This quotation plainly infers that Jesus must have been the Son of God before he was sent to this world. In the previous verse we find:

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

From this quotation we are warranted in drawing the following conclusions; first, that God and the Son were two separate and independent beings, two gods; second, that the one was the son of the other, was "begotten" by the other, and therefore had a definite beginning at some time subsequent to the existence of the other; and, third, I believe we are warranted in the inference, also, that Jesus had a mother at the time he was first begotten, and became the Son of God. I have no doubt, that the relation of father

and son (begotten by the father) implies and necessitates the relation of mother and son, as well; all of which adds to the complexity and unreasonableness of the theory that Jesus was a god, or the son of a god.

The evidence is not uniform as to whether or not Jesus believed himself to be God. In the 16th chapter of Matthew, verses 15-19, it is strongly suggested that Jesus believed himself to be "the Christ, the Son of the living God." There he seemed to be thoroughly inbued with the notion that he was the special representative of God to establish a church. Whether he clamed to be the real natural Son of God or a son only in an adopted sense is not quite clear. He admitted that he was less than the Father (Jn. 14:28). He rebuked the one who called him "Good Master," saying "There is none good, save one, even God."—Lk. 18:19. Upon the whole, it would seem that we are warranted in believing that neither he nor his disciples considered him anything more than a great man, a leader.

Another reason for believing Jesus not to have been God, is the fact, that nothing that he believed or did in his career on earth entitles him to be ranked as a god.

While Jesus was not a theologian, he was a religionist. He believed in a great personal God, in a personal evil one, called both "Satan" and the "devil", in messengers of God or angels. He believed that God continually communicated with man through his angels, and often talked directly to good men, chosen as prophets or oracles to transmit his will to man, and finally, that God often performed miracles to accomplish his purpose and to show his power to mankind. These beliefs were not original with Jesus; they were the common beliefs of the Jewish people of the time of Jesus.

Jesus became a disciple of John, and was baptized by him (see Mk. 1:9). Not long after this John was thrown into prison and later put to death, and his religious movement would probably have come to an untimely end, had it not been for Jesus. Seeing this new movement, with which he had become identified, without a leader, Jesus took up the cause. At first he preached exactly the same things that John had preached: "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."—Mt. 4:17. But as he

continued his labors, his teachings became more extensive and comprehensive. Jesus remained the leader of this movement until the time of his death.

It is not easy to determine just what Jesus did teach, for the reason that so much of the history is interwoven with wonder-stories, which cannot be depended upon for the facts. Besides these, however, we have the parables, the sermon on the mount, and other instruction given to his disciples. And while some of these lines of information seem much more reliable than others, as to what Jesus did teach, yet there is not much inconsistency as to the religious teachings that run through them. He had no fault to find with the "law", but he did continually find fault with the mechanical obedience which the Jews yielded to the law. He always looked beyond the "letter" that "killeth" to the "spirit" that "giveth life." The so-called "sermon on the mount," which, by the way, is not a sermon and never was a sermon, is a valuable collection of the more important teachings of Jesus. There are many things about it that may be criticised; it lacks unity and logical order; it contains some harsh and cutting things, yet with all, it contains a large number of most beautiful gems of moral thought.

But there is nothing in the line of his moral or religious teachings that is super-human. Many of the good things he taught were not original with him, but had been taught by others before him. To Jesus however, must be given the credit for having worked up these moral and religious teachings into a sort of code, which became the nucleus or organizing force in a movement, which Jesus succeeded in setting on foot. This movement finally took the form of the Church, the instrument through which Christianity has lived, grown and exercised its influence as a religious and moral force in the world. Jesus was the leader and founder of this great movement, whose influence, having out-lived the "fortunes of kings and mutations of empires," is a most potent factor in our present advanced civilization. This I freely say of Jesus as to his greatness and his worth to mankind, but beyond this I cannot go.

His death is held up to us as a gift of God, an atonement for the sins of mankind. This it seems to me, is the crudest

and most puerile contention of all orthodox Christian theology. There are so many unreasonable things about this atonement theory, that I scarcely know which I ought to commence with.

Jesus is said to have borne "our sins, in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed."—I Peter 2:24. "Sin is the transgression of the law."—I Jn. 3:4. When we transgress the laws of nature, which are the laws of God, we must suffer the penalty. What is the penalty? The natural and legitimate consequence of our transgressions. Can some one else suffer this penalty for us? If one person commits murder, can another pay the penalty? One person transgresses the law of health and contracts a disease can some one else pay the penalty? But suppose for the sake of the argument that sin is a debt and may be paid by some one else. Let us try to apply this condition to Jesus. God sent Jesus into the world to pay this debt or penalty. Jesus came to earth, lived 30 years, and then started a movement on foot which was obnoxious to the people and they, after a sort of trial, condemned him to death and executed him. He did not kill himself, he did not die because he wanted to die, he did not offer himself as a sacrifice, but he was put to death because he had incurred the enmity and hatred of a people, who believed he ought to die to pay the penalty of his own acts; and they carried out their beliefs. I cannot imagine such a death as being a voluntary sacrifice of love for the sins of the world; nor do I believe any one else, who will consider the facts, will so believe. History tells us of hundreds of zealous martyrs who have suffered more cruel deaths, and did it more willingly than did Jesus. No one ever thought or said anything about their dying for the sins of the world, or as an effort of a loving God to save mankind.

If you will allow me to call Jesus a man, I can truly say he was a great man and did a great work for mankind; but, if you insist that I call him God, then he was about the most frail and insignificant god reported in all mythology.

Let us indulge our imaginations for a moment: Suppose, that instead of converting a few thousand people by his

teachings as he did, he had converted a large majority of the whole nation (and I submit, that if he had been God, he could have done this), what would have been the result? First, he would not have been crucified, and would have been permitted to continue his work. The Christian movement in its infancy would have been stronger than it was. Can you imagine any bad results upon Christianity that could have arisen from such a condition of things? I cannot. Jesus would under such circumstances never have been crucified. He could have died a natural death or would be with us yet. Think how much grander it would have been for Jesus just to have stayed with us through all these changing scenes for two thousand years. How much more he would have been worth to mankind, right here among us, than he really has been, sitting up in heaven on a throne with God. Think of the work he could have done among men, all through the centuries—the souls converted, the evils suppressed, the suffering relieved and the happiness brought to the world.

Of course, such a plan would have spoiled all this atonement, this dying for the sins of the world, and we would have to forego singing about being "Washed in the blood of Jesus," but I believe the end would have justified the means.

It would not have taken a very powerful god to climb down off of that cross and spread consternation among those old Jewish Rabbis, who had come to enjoy his execution. If Jesus had even done that, it would have been the grandest thing for Christianity that ever happened.

But he did none of these things, he was only a man, and could not free himself from the fetters of the law, could not overcome the prejudice that grew up against him.

CHAPTER IX

WAS JESUS PERFECT

In order to retain Jesus as the Savior of mankind, there is a growing tendency among those who are beginning to realize the utter fallacy of the deity of Jesus, to exalt him to the rank of an ideal man. They would have us believe that while Jesus was only a man, he was a perfect man; that by being to mankind the example of a perfect life, he leads them on to salvation and is thus still their redeemer and savior. I recently received a very interesting little monograph in which this tendency is made a prominent feature. The book is entitled "The Divinity of Christ," and its author Edward Scribner Ames, minister of the Hyde Park Church of Disciples of Christ, and Assistant Professor of Philosophy in the University of Chicago.

The following are quotations from this book, showing as accurately as may be his adherence to this tendency.

"The inquiry now is not so much how he (Jesus) came into being, but what was his actual life among men, what were his thoughts, his feelings, his volitions."—p. 18.

"It was commonly believed that the Gods took women of the human race for wives, and it was inevitable that as Jesus came to be regarded as a great personage, this half divine, half human parentage should be ascribed to him also. That these miracles and this birth should still be regarded by informed men of the present day as actual, literal facts, is striking evidence of how much of the primitive age of child-wonder and savage credulity still survives in the world."—p. 25.

"If he (Jesus) only acted out on earth the part for which he had been coached in heaven, or if he did a man's task with a God's strength, or if he possessed the equivalent of a magic key to unlock the plain, everyday difficulties

which we meet barehanded, then he only makes our despair the deeper; for he is a constant reminder that we are mocked by a categorical imperative to perform duties too great for us, and to solve problems which to our reason are conundrums, forever dark to our natural thought by virtue of a double use of words."—p. 29.

These and other passages found in this book, prove conclusively that the author does not believe in the deity of Jesus, but believes that Jesus was a human being, born just as we were born.

Taking up the author's evidences of the "divinity" of Jesus, I call your attention first to the meaning of the word "divinity."

He does not mean by "divinity of Christ" that Christ was God; he simply means that Christ was the embodiment of the good and true; not that he was a "Son of God" by virtue of an immaculate conception, (for plainly the author does not believe in the immaculate conception); but to use his own language:

"It is in this way that Jesus Christ is recognized as the son of God, not by accident, nor by the contravention of law, but by the perceptible and conscious unfolding within him of a spirit sublime enough to be the revelation of the spiritual nature of the world."—p. 17.

"Happy are we to have had that marvelous man born as one of our own race, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh; and happy indeed are we if we believe that God is his Father, full of the same grace and truth. To this historic Jesus, as to the fountain head, men have returned and will return, generation after generation, for ideals, for comfort and strength."—p. 20.

"But on the other hand, if he really was like us born of two human parents, nurtured by a good mother, schooled in the love of his people, sensitive to its plaintive minor note, responsive to the best of the prophetic ideals and the wisdom of the wise men; able to translate all this into the beatitudes and the story of the prodigal son and the good Samaritan; able also to actually practice genuine friendship with Zaccheus and the Samaritan woman and with Judas, and to forgive those who crucified him; always believing

in the power of love and of his righteous cause; then he makes our heart burn within us, he draws us into his fellowship, he affords us courage and faith and redeems us from all sin and weakness."—p. 29-30.

"He is a revelation of the world, of nature, of God. In this way, with his marvelous moral grandeur and simplicity, Jesus Christ seems to me to be a revelation of the best things we know about the world."—p. 32.

Thus, the author gives up some of the beliefs that are dear to orthodoxy, such as, the immaculate conception, the deity of Jesus and miracles; yet he strives to make Jesus an ideal or perfect man—such an example of perfection as may be held up to all the world; which position, though less objectionable, is hardly more tenable than those he has abandoned.

Assuming that Jesus was a human being, let us consider what merit there is in the claim that he was a "revelation of the best things we know about the world," and whether or not we can consistently look upon him as an ideal of human existence, the perfect man. In order to arrive at a correct judgment in this matter, we should consider:

(1.) His Life. Whether it was such a life as any person would want to live or could afford to try to live; whether it would be best for humanity if we should all strive to live such lives as that of Jesus; whether, in the last analysis, human perfection could be reached, if we could all model our lives after his.

(2.) His teachings, both by precept and example. Whether they are consistent and whether they constitute the *ne plus ultra*, the last words and examples for our intellectual moral and physical guidance. If so, Jesus is entitled to be called the redeemer and savior of mankind; but if his life and teachings fail in all or any of these respects, then his claim to the title of redeemer and savior must fall, and we must look elsewhere for the perfect man.

At the very outset we are confronted with the fact that Jesus was never married; never had a wife or children or home; never experienced that most sublime of all experiences, conjugal love, that kiss and embrace of the holiest of human

affections, without which no man or woman's life is perfect; never had a home or helped to make one. And there is no indication that his disposition and life had the tone that these highest of human experiences give. He calls attention to the precept "Honor thy father and thy mother," (Mk. 7:10-11) but have we a single instance of his ever having done so? On the contrary, the records show that he did not do this (See Mk. 3:33-35, and Jn. 2:4). The only recorded instance of real human affection on the part of Jesus is that he wept when told by Mary of the death of Lazarus; but this was not extraordinary, for Mary was weeping and the Jews that were present wept. How can we idealize and consider perfect a man who never had a home, was never a husband, or a father, never showed any filial affection for his parents, and so far as we know had few, if any, bosom friends?

Considered from a scientific view-point, Jesus falls short of being the perfect life and ideal to hold up to mankind. We might as well speak of a staminate plant as a perfect plant. Plant it by itself and it is imperfect and falls short of the mission of its own existence. This phase of the life of Jesus has doubtless led to the establishment of nunneries, monasteries and convents. Is that our ideal, our conception of the perfect man? From the view-point of the welfare of the human race and progress in moral and civil life, such a conception of human life is anything but ideal.

Considering, as we are now, the question of the prefection of Jesus, we find a problem, when we concede the suggestion of Dr. Ames, that Jesus was only a man like us, "born of two human parents" and that "these miracles and this birth" (of Jesus) belong to the "primitive age of child-wonder and savage credulity." It is this: Jesus either knew that he could not perform miracles and wilfully went about pretending to do so, or he was himself ignorant and superstitious and worked himself, as well as others, up to the point of believing that he actually could and did perform miracles. Which horn of the dilemma shall we take? Was Jesus an impostor, willfully and dishonestly deceiving the people; or was he ignorant and superstitious, belonging to the "primitive" and "child-wonder" age in

which he lived? My honest belief is that the latter is true, and it is certainly the charitable view to take of the matter. I think Jesus was a child of the age in which he lived. His education was nothing out of the ordinary, he believed in the Jewish theology, which from its beginning was full of miracles and wonder-stories. Why should not Jesus believe these things, just as his brethren did? The evidence shows that he did.

It is barely possible, that Jesus had nothing to do at all with the wonder-stories told of him, and that the stories were all made up by zealous admirers and disciples, long after the death of Jesus. I would be glad to think this were true and to know that Jesus, who in some respects was certainly a very grand man, had nothing to do with these unreasonable and superstitious stories told of him. However, if we discard all these so-called stories and so-called miracles, we will have little left of the meager history given us of the life of Jesus. We can hardly retain the statement that Jesus "went about doing good," when we discard practically everything which he is said to have done. His principal work seemed to be going from town to town and from place to place, preaching in the synagogues and casting out devils. (Mk. 2:39.) While I do not believe these wonder-stories, I presume that Jesus made these tours of preaching and teaching and that there were occurrences from which tradition handed down to subsequent generations these stories. These occurrences evidently impressed the people with more or less of the supernatural, and were construed by Jesus and his disciples as being manifestations of supernatural or miraculous power. As before suggested, I think the intellectual condition of the people, their religious beliefs, and teachings up to that time, made them an easy prey to their own imaginations, and I think Jesus, as well as his disciples and others associated at these gatherings, thought and believed that supernatural power was often manifested in these occurrences.

But whether we consider Jesus a rank impostor or a common person of his generation and time, whose imagination and lack of knowledge caused him to believe that supernatural manifestations occurred on these occasions, the fact remains

that such a person was not a perfect man or an ideal to whom mankind can look for guidance down through the ages.

Jesus taught, as every one does, by precept and by example. By precept Jesus taught some wise and some unwise things. When he attempted to teach the duty of man to his fellow man and to himself, his teaching was usually profound and sublime. His better teachings form the basis of the Christian religion of today, and of these teachings we cannot speak too highly.

On the other hand, his teachings concerning God are no better than the ancient Jewish theology, full of wonder-stories and cruel and unjust treatment of God to man. If he is the author of Mk. 16:16, one can scarcely conceive of a more cruel and unjust thing than his statement there that "he that believeth not shall be condemned."

Neither were his acts always examples of the highest type of mankind.

He was sometimes ugly and abrupt with his mother. It is related in Mk. 3:31-35 that he disregarded her call for him, ignored her and his brothers and proceeded to make a speech to the effect, that mother and brothers were no more to him than any other good people. In Jn. 2:1-5, when the mother said to him, "They have no wine," he answered her, "Woman what have I to do with thee?" There is to me something despicable about this language of Jesus to his mother. They were in public, in company with others, the mother's suggestion was not rude and called for no such retort from a son more than 30 years old, who is supposed to be an ideal man. One can almost see a sneer and look of disgust in his face at the thought, that she should presume to address him in the presence of such company. It seems that he was ashamed of her and would have liked to disown her as his mother.

Jesus at times showed an uncontrollable and unreasonable temper. He cursed a fig tree, because he was hungry and the tree had no fruit on it. (Mk. 11:14). If we assume that he did, or even pretended to do this, what a peevish, childish act it was. When Peter called attention to what he had done, Jesus answered, "Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, That whoever shall say unto this mountain,

Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith." What do you think of this answer? Does he mean that through faith in God one can kill a fig tree just because he gets out of patience when it does not furnish fruit out of season? Yet, this is the person that Dr. Ames would hold up to the world as the ideal, the perfect man, who "affords us courage and faith and redeems us from all sin and weakness."

I have only hurriedly touched upon some of the defects in the life and character of Jesus, but what I have found out in this short investigation convinces me that Jesus can in no reasonable sense be considered the ideal or perfect man.

CHAPTER X

THE HEREAFTER

The question of what becomes of a human being after this earthly career is ended, is at once the question of most interest and least study of the problems that appeal to the mind of man.

We are taught that there is a personal existence for each of us beyond the grave, and that the good will experience joy and happiness infinitely better and greater than it is possible to experience here on earth. Yet, when we come to face death, none who are healthy and rational want to go. The whole question of the hereafter is, to the average person, beclouded with misty conceptions or rather imagination.

The Bible does not give us any very clear conception of what we may expect the future life to be. Probably our predominant notions of heaven and hell are gathered from Revelations.

"I heard a voice from heaven saying: Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; for their works follow with them."—Rev. 14:13.

"And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, even the lake of fire. And if any was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire."—Rev. 20:14-15.

The prevailing thought is that heaven is, and will be throughout eternity, a place of REST for the good; and that hell is and will be throughout eternity, a place of PUNISHMENT for the wicked.

Neither is the Bible clear as to the nature of the existence of the human being in the future. From some passages it would seem that both the souls and bodies of the good

go to heaven, and both the souls and bodies of the bad are sent to hell. From other passages it would seem that the bodies of the dead are not resurrected, but new and different bodies are furnished them.

Again, we are puzzled to know what employment or business will constitute the life aim of one in the future world; what kind of surroundings and opportunities heaven will furnish to those who are fortunate enough to pass the pearly gates. These and many other perplexing questions must arise in the minds of those who would candidly consider the problems of a future life.

None of us knows much about the future. It has been one of the great problems of the ages to find out something about the future, and more particularly to find out something about the future of man.

We are told, that we should refrain from studying and discussing such questions as these; that they are beyond our comprehension; and that we are meddling with Providence, so to speak, in trying to find out what is none of our business. It is true that we know very, very little about these matters; it is also true that we may never be able to find out much about them; but I submit that we are not in contempt of the Divine Court for seeking to know more of the truth about these all-absorbing problems. The brow of God has never frowned upon the candid seeker after the truth. While I promise my reader nothing in the way of a final solution, I believe I can do something toward clarifying the atmosphere, so that we may get, at least, a satisfactory view of the great problem of the hereafter.

I. The Resurrection of The Body.

In the first place let us consider a few things we find in the Bible bearing upon our subject:

"and Enoch walked with God; and he was not; for God took him."—Gen. 5:24.

From this, I infer that the writer of Genesis means to tell us that Enoch was taken soul and body to heaven, or the abode of God. That would mean that human flesh,

blood and bones went to heaven and lived there. This notion is confirmed in Hebrews:

"By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and he was not found because God translated him."—Heb. 11:5.

If he did not see death, the soul and body were never separated, and the body went with the soul to heaven. For if there was no death, there was no separation of soul and body.

This same sort of "translation" is related of the prophet Elijah:

"And it came to pass, as they (Elijah and Elisha) still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, which parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven."—Kings 2:11.

Evidently, the writer means that Elijah went to heaven just as he lived on earth, a human being. No body was left, for the next verse reads in part: "And he (Elisha) saw him (Elijah) no more." If it had been the intention of the writer to say that Elijah dies and that his soul ascended to heaven, leaving the body, we know that he would not have used the language quoted.

According to the Bible, Jesus himself experienced this sort of translation to heaven with soul and body together. For his resurrection was a reuniting of his soul with the human body that was placed in the sepulcher, the same body that he exposed to Thomas, showing him the nail-marks in his hands and spear-marks in his side. It was this same body that he took to heaven, when he ascended.

Isaiah tells us that the body shall be resurrected:

"The dead shall live; my dead body shall arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast forth the dead."—Is. 26:19.

Without a doubt, the writer of this quotation believed that the dead body of man is to be raised and be as it was before death, just as indicated in the resurrection of Jesus. Yet, how absurd and impossible such a thing would be. A man dies, his body wastes away, nothing is left as it was, save possibly a bone or tooth, and that will in time decompose

and change. The materials which once composed the body will continue to the end of time changing and uniting in all the various combinations, compounds and structures of which they are susceptible under the conditions through which they shall pass. A body molders away and joins its kindred dust. "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes and dust to dust." It becomes gas, water and earth; it enters the bodies of plants, animals and other men, on and on, until time shall be no more. Some of the elements which today compose your body, may have heretofore been in succession the parts of a dozen different dead human bodies. In the resurrection of these bodies, to whose bodies will these elements belong?

On the other hand, notwithstanding the testimony already adduced from the Bible tending to show that soul and body go together to heaven, and that the actual material human body will after death be reunited with the soul and continue thus throughout eternity, we are confronted with a flat denial of this proposition:

"Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither can corruption inherit incorruption." I Cor. 15:50.

Paul undertakes to explain this problem of how we bury one body and resurrect another. He says:

"But some will say how are the dead raised? and with what manner of body do they come? Thou foolish one, that which thou thyself sowest is not quickened except it die: And that which thou sowest, thou sow not the body that shall be but a bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or some other kind; but God giveth a body even as it pleased him, and to each seed a body of its own.—I Cor. 15:35-39. "So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body: it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body."—I Cor. 15:42-44.

Paul uses a very ingenious figure of speech here. There is an apparent plausibility in what he says, till you begin to examine it, and then to use his own language, it appears "foolish." He likens the burial of a dead body to the plant-

ing of seed or grain. Can you by any reasonable stretch of the imagination find a similarity between burying a human body and the planting of a seed? A seed planted to grow, is complete in itself; it has in it the latent germs of life; as soon as the proper conditions of moisture and heat are present, it begins to grow and produce a new body. Yes, a new body, but that new body is exactly similar in nature and kind to that which produced the seed that was planted. On the contrary, death and decay have preceded even the burial of the dead body. Instead of being complete, as the seed, dissolution has already begun. Instead of having in the dead body the latent germs of a new being awaiting an opportunity to grow and develop, as in the case with the seed that is planted, life has ceased and the entire body decomposes and returns to the elements. But says Paul: "It is sown (buried) a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body." What does this mean? "It" (that is the body) is sown (buried) a natural body; "it (the body) is raised a spiritual body. The expression "natural body" is clear, but what does he mean by "spiritual body"? This resurrection as Paul explains it, evidently consists in changing the dead and decomposed matter of a human body into a living spirit. Are they interchangeable? Are dead matter and living spirit made up of the same elementary components, so that one can be changed into the other? If the composition of the spiritual body is not identical with the dead matter of the body that decays in the grave, then resurrection does not mean that the old body is raised at all; it means that the old body is left in its decomposition and a new body formed of different elements or substance is, not resurrected, but substituted for the old body.

But, if the old body is not raised, how are we to account for the risen body of Jesus Christ having the nail-prints in the hands and the spear-wounds in the side? And it was this same body that Luke tells us was carried up to heaven. "And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up to heaven."—Lk. 24:51.

So it is plain, that from the Bible we are unable to decide whether there is a resurrection of the body or not. But,

from our own reasoning and experiences, we know that the human body decays after death, disintegrates and separates. We know that human bodies have been eaten by cannibals and have at once become constituent parts of other human beings. It is certain that since the origin of man the same materials have composed the dead bodies of different persons. It is therefore unreasonable and impossible that these human bodies of ours should after death be reorganized and resurrected.

II. The Immorality of the Soul.

It is a matter of common knowledge and a fact that will not be disputed, that the burden of the message of orthodox Christianity to humanity is that this life is a preparatory state; that, after death, the immortal part of man will come before the bar of God, where this life with its every thought and action, will be considered and passed upon and judgment will be rendered, decreeing that "These (the wicked) shall go away into eternal punishment; but the righteous unto eternal life." The great effort of Christian missionary work among the people is to induce them to prepare for the hereafter and to lead such lives here on earth as will after death serve as a passport to heaven, where they may enjoy unsullied bliss and supreme happiness throughout an endless eternity.

It is the purpose here to point out some of the unsatisfactory conditions and results that necessarily follow from this conception of the hereafter.

Assuming, for the purposes of this examinations all the surroundings and conditions necessary to this theory of the hereafter, what do we find in it all that would be satisfactory or desirable?

Our attention is first directed to the obliteration of the domestic ties and relations in passing from this life. Two infants are born into the world, a girl and a boy, in different homes. Their first knowledge is that of their respective homes—fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters. Infancy grows to youth; youth to manhood and womanhood. With the physical growth comes mental growth. This growth and

development only emphasize the incompleteness in each. Something is lacking in each which the other can supply. Soon the nature of their beings and surroundings attracts each to the other. They meet, love and marry, and a new home is created.

Thus far, it may be truly said, these two have lived a preparatory life—growing physically and intellectually, morally and socially, learning the ways of the world in which they are to live and the meaning and aim of the life before them. But now they are entering upon real life-work. If it is a real home, love and happiness prevail, and another unit of moral and social force is added to the community in which they live. Time passes; children are born and reared; the husband and wife (now father and mother) reach and pass the meridian of life. Their children gradually grow to manhood and womanhood, and one by one, leave to unite with others to build homes of their own. Father and mother grow old, their life-work has been accomplished. See them as they journey hand in hand down the western slope.

The brave manhood and lovely womanhood are stricken with age; the body weakens, the mind weakens, and the end comes. Their labors are over, and we lay them to rest. Let us say that these two were good children, good husband and wife, good father and mother, good neighbors and good citizens.

Pause a moment to consider: Have their lives been complete, or have they only been preparing for some other life? If only preparatory, for what have they prepared? Should a mind grow old and feeble in its preparatory state? But I must turn from this thought at present.

We are told that Death is the ferryman that transports us to the other shore where we must appear before the bar of God. The souls of these two whom we have followed through a happy and useful life, are now in the presence of the great Judge. Listen to the sentence which greets them. "Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as angels of God in heaven."—Mt. 22:29-30.

This quotation, you will remember, is an answer to the question proposed by the Sadducees as to the relation in heaven between the woman and the seven men, all of whom had been her husbands on earth. The unavoidable conclusion from this quotation is that there will be no husbands and wives in heaven. From a logical view-point too that is perfectly reasonable. The perpetuation of life in heaven is presumably by immortality of the inhabitants, and not by reproduction. There will be no need for man and woman, or male and female.

But think of the effect of this judgment upon the two, who are expecting and who deserve the best that heaven can furnish them. The two, who have traveled the journey of this life together, whose lives have been one, who have lived and loved together, who have joined in one flesh, have brought into the world and reared their children, are in heaven to become separate and independent beings—no home, no husband or wife. We remember the old song, "Some have husbands over yonder, etc." and "We'll go and see them bye and bye, etc." But they will not be our husbands or our wives. Why should we want to see them? Will we remember the loved ones as they were here on earth? If so, what pleasure can we have in heaven to see them, when the holy relations of husband and wife, parent and child have ceased and the domestic tie and every feature of it is broken up and gone forever? Eternity under such conditions might be satisfactory to some persons, but to me it does not look very flattering. However, we have considered only a part of the unsatisfactory conditions of heaven.

If the lines are drawn as close as some of our orthodox brethren would have us think they will be, some of us will not get to heaven at all. We will have mothers in heaven and fathers in hell; husbands in heaven and wives in hell; sisters in heaven and brothers in hell, and so on. I have in mind a good mother, who has long since gone to her reward in heaven, if that is where the good go after death. She had a wayward son who was addicted to the intemperate use of intoxicating drink. He never joined the church, never professed faith in Jesus Christ, and in many ways was not as moral as he ought to have been; but he was honest, kind-

hearted and generous, fairly industrious and in many ways a good man. He finally died in a drunken spree. I have heard that mother say, "Well, John was not what I wish he might have been, but he was the kindest boy to me that I had." (And she had several boys.) I am sure she spent many an hour grieving over the fact that John was doomed to eternal punishment; for she was a good orthodox Christian woman. If it is true that John is now is hell and she in heaven, has her mind so changed that she has lost her love for him? Has she become an "angel of God" and quit thinking about John, or loving him or worrying about him? If she is in heaven and has quit thinking about John and loving him, then she is not the same woman that was here on earth, she has not the same mind, the same feeling or the same soul that she had here.

This whole theory of a heaven and a hell hereafter seems to be a misfit. It is not a proper sequel to the present existence. Either human nature must be altogether changed or the heaven pointed out to us would prove to be a place of gloom and sorrow to the majority of the good people who might be fortunate enough to be admitted there.

The next question I desire to consider is whether or not this life is a preparatory state, and whether or not the existence beyond the grave is a real life for which we are only preparing here. What is there in this life that indicates that it is a preparatory state?

One enters this life a mere germ, an undeveloped being. The mind, soul and spirit are as undeveloped as the body. In fact, the human being starts its existence with the dawn of this life. It grows and develops all together; the body grows and gradually develops; the mind grows and gradually develops also; the feelings and will grow as they are nourished, cultivated and exercised. One passes successively the stages of childhood and youth, and finally arrives at manhood or womanhood. The entire being reaches maturity. After a period of active life of from forty to fifty years, the whole being begins to fail. Age comes on, the physical and mental powers grow weak, and the individual finally becomes helpless, physically and mentally. The soul as well as the body has run its course and the end comes.

What is there in all this that would indicate a preparation for a continuation of this being in its organized form? Is an aged and decrepit soul that has forgotten nearly all it ever knew, that has become weak and worn out, a necessary preparation for a future life of activity? In what respect is not this life complete in itself, and in what respect is it a preparation for some future life?

If this life is a preparation for a future life, why has the great Creator arranged the conditions so that more than half of the human family are cut off in infancy, childhood and youth before that preparation can possibly be made? And if this preparation for the future life is necessary, what is the condition and lot of those who are hurried off to eternity without it? Everything about this preparation-for-a-future-life theory seems inexplainable and absurd. There is nothing plausible or satisfactory about it, and I cannot believe it is God's plan.

It will do us no good to persuade ourselves to believe something that is not true. If a man has a soul that survives death, then that is God's law and we should all be more than pleased to know that such is the case; if, on the other hand, man ceases to have an organic existence at death, then, that is God's law and we should all be equally pleased to know that such is the case. Whatever facts we can find in regard to this important question, we ought to consider candidly and be willing to accept the most reasonable conclusion we can arrive at from these facts.

I have just completed the reading of a very interesting book entitled "Modern Light on Immortality." The author makes a very learned and exhaustive plea for the immortality of the the soul of man. He strives very hard to locate and define the soul. Probably the most satisfactory definition he gives is as follows: "The soul of a living being, then, may be construed as the composite of its physical, vital and psychical forces, merged into a super-sensible energy or conscious personality, that constitutes the presiding power over the organism." According to this definition, the physical force, the life (vital) force and the mental (psychical) force together constitute the soul. If our present theory of the conservation of

force and energy is true, and it is generally accepted, these forces existed in one form or another, before they were brought together in the human body and organized into the soul; just as the matter forming the human body existed in one form or another before it was brought together and organized into the body. The body seems to be the necessary place and condition for the organization and development of the soul as well as of the physical being. No one would ever suspect or believe that these forces are ever brought together and organized into a soul except through the instrumentality and conditions furnished by the body. Thus the soul grows and develops with the body, it reaches and manifests its mature strength and power in conjunction with the mature development and strength of the body; and as the body grows old, weak and feeble, so do the soul forces grow weak, inactive and feeble. It is a maxim of the school teacher that one cannot have a sound, healthy mind in an undeveloped or diseased body.

Not only is it a fact, that the human body is continually changing during life, throwing off waste matter and building in new tissue, but it is also true that all of the forces of the human soul are continually being expended and renewed. The organization alone remains constant; the elements of force and matter entering into the human existence are continually changing. The store house of force is matter. We do not know of the existence of force except as it manifests itself through matter, and it is a gratuitous assumption to say that force, whatever it may be, has an organic existence separate and apart from matter in some form.

It would seem the only logical conclusion that can be drawn from these facts, is that the organic existence of these forces depends upon the organic existence of the body; and that when the body disintegrates and returns to its elemental material forms, the soul also disintegrates and returns to its elemental force forms. Scientifically, I see no other possible conclusion, and logically, I see no need for any other inference.

I believe as I have often said, that under our present system of religion, too much stress is placed upon the preparation for a future life, and in the contemplation of the

delights that we imagine such a life will afford, and too little attention is given to the wonderful opportunities for usefulness and happiness in this life. In fact, this world and this life are pointed out to us as a "vale of tears" and a place of sorrow. When we are "despising the things of this world," we should remember that this world is just as much the handiwork of God as any future world can be. We have no evidence that God made any failure or mistake in the creation of this world, or that the future will produce any change other than the gradual development or evolution, which seems to have been the law of the universe from the infinite past to the present time.

I challenge the reader to imagine a heaven or a future world better than this world now is. Remember that when you undertake this, you are to plan a whole world and not just a little insignificant portion. We must remember also that worlds are governed by a complete and perfect system of laws and not by exceptions and miracles. I am frank to confess, that I have never seen a picture or listened to a description of heaven that looked half as good to me as this old world of ours.

Nothing ought to be so important to us as to live this life the very best we know how. When we shall have done this we will have fulfilled the mission of our existence.

CHAPTER XI.

CONCLUSION, THE VALUE OF LIFE

I realize that in this book, I have opposed many of the teachings and beliefs held sacred by honest Christian people. The infallibility of the Bible, the personal God, the deity of Jesus, the resurrection of the body, and even the immortality of the soul (in the commonly accepted sense of that term) have been assailed, and, in my judgment, successfully disproven. And, if I have been successful in this effort, a new problem arises.

We are told by those who believe in the resurrection of the body and the organic existence of the soul after death, that this life is not an aimless existence but is a preparatory state in which we are fitting ourselves for real life beyond the grave. Now, if this be not true, then are we to conclude that this life is merely an accidental existence and without purpose? I have always contended and urged that evolution is the law of the universe, and that we should look for and confidently expect a gradual improvement and development in all things. But, if man comes into the world, lives out a brief existence and then returns to the elements, as the arguments in this book would indicate, where is the improvement, the development and the progress that the law of evolution demands? What is there in it all that makes life worth while?

Whether these and similar questions have appealed to the reader, I do not know; but I do know that they are pertinent at this time. A discussion of the problem of the value of life is a suitable conclusion to what has been already considered in this book.

Before attempting any solution of my own for this great problem, let us examine the solution which orthodoxy gives:

In heaven, we will have a delightful place of rest, a beautiful city of pure gold, with foundation of precious stones, walls of Jaspar and gates of Pearl. God the Father will

be the great King and sit upon his throne, Jesus will be there on the right hand of God, angels will be ever in attendance and all the redeemed will be there. But pause a moment! What will it all be for? What is to be accomplished? What is the meaning of such a heaven? Salvation is the great incentive held out to the world—salvation from hell, salvation from eternal punishment, salvation from the consequences of our sins. But after we are saved, after we pass through the pearly gates, then what? We shall bask in the sunshine of the presence of God. But will we want to do that forever? We shall enjoy rest from all our labors, toils and tribulations here on earth. But will we want to rest forever? We shall shout and sing and praise "God and the Lamb." But will we want to do that throughout eternity? What has any one ever suggested for our mission, our aim, our life work in the next world? What can we do in heaven that will add to progress and development, or that will be worth while? When we have considered this problem from the orthodox view-point, there is absolutely nothing in it beyond the selfish desire to live forever.

I have never doubted that the world is continually growing better, and that the life of every reasonably good man or woman adds something to that growth. And while it will be difficult to follow out the minute details of that growth and the connections which unite each individual with the same; yet, I am willing to undertake to give my general conception of this great fact.

A human being comes into existence by an organization of appropriate matter and force. These constituents existed from eternity, but were never before organized and related to each other in just the way in which they are now organized and related. Under favorable circumstances the being grows and develops into manhood or womanhood. An active life of some 40 or 50 years follows, after which old age comes on. This human organization has about completed its work and the degeneration commences. Soon the organization falls to pieces and death is the result. The matter and force, though not destroyed or annihilated, change their forms of manifestation, and we recognize them no more, other than as parts of the great fountain

or source of matter and force. This in brief is the history of mankind. Where is the eternal worth of this existence; what is the evolution, the progress, the development? And, if there is such a thing as eternal value, or permanent improvement and progress, where do we find it and how can we explain it without the aid of the so-called "immortality of the soul?"

Briefly, I may answer this question of questions by saying, we must find it in the life-work of the individual. A man lives beyond the grave in two ways, (1) by the example and influence he gives to others during his life and (2) by the offspring, the children, he brings into the world to survive him. These two things constitute the immortality of man. They may not conform to our notions of immortality, and at first impulse, may be disappointing to us; but let no one cast this matter aside without careful consideration. I believe the only immortality worth while must emanate from these two sources. The example and influence that we give to the world are measured by just what we are. Each one is an example that some one else will imitate and follow; every one has an influence for good or bad among his friends and associates. The extent of this example and influence depends upon the personality, the intelligence, the power, the ability of the individual. The result of this influence and example does not live as a monument to the memory of the individual; that is, it is not kept and recognized as a distinct ingredient of Worth contributed by Mr. or Mrs. So-and-so. This result unites with those of a thousand other influences and examples, and the resultant of all these is our present intellectual, moral and social fabric. These examples and influences, like the other forces of nature, are not lost but are united into one grand resultant.

He who has encouraged others (and especially the young) to educate themselves for the work of this life, who has induced them to contemplate the ideal, to think holy thoughts, perform noble deeds; he who has himself resolved ever to strive for a higher plane of life, who has a fraternal love for mankind, who has been of valuable service to his fellows, who. has appre-

ciated the handiwork of God and taught others to do so, who has loved and sought the truth, pitied the ignorant and hated the evil—He who has done these things, has added eternal values to the progress and evolution of the universe. The hundredth generation hence will be better for his having lived; yea, the universe throughout eternity will retain that increment of good which he has contributed. This is immortality; not that selfish immortality that would have the individual organism exist throughout eternity for its own sake without any further development or progress; and without any end to be accomplished beyond that of organic existence; but that true immortality, which adds to the progress and evolution of the universe the increments of eternal development and worth.

The other element of immortality possible to all healthy human beings, is the posterity which they may leave as a further contribution to the active, progressive element in nature.

This is the greatest opportunity of all for one to perpetuate and improve the existence and life given him. In the first place, the child inherits much from the parent. The child is the first step in the perpetuation of the vital existence of the parent. The child is sometimes spoken of as being "of the flesh and blood," of the parents. This is true only in a sense, for we learn that the physical make-up of the individual is constantly changing and that the flesh and blood of an individual of today were not the same yesterday, and will not be the same tomorrow. We might better say the child is of the same being or organism of the parent. It comes from the parent and is the same organism or being throughout its life.

Parents impress themselves upon their children and enter into their being in two ways, (1) by heredity and (2) by personal influence and example. Without undertaking to detail the extent and nature of the inherited characteristics from parent to child, I may say in a general way that mental power and ability are hereditary; moral character is hereditary; aesthetical talents are hereditary; and physical peculiarities and qualities are hereditary. So, one transmits to his offspring very much of himself, physically, mentally

and morally.

In addition to the hereditary transmission of one's self to his posterity, each parent has the greatest possible opportunity for impressing himself upon his children by precept and example. Each child is entitled to receive from its parents this fullest measure of their influence and instruction. The result of this influence and instruction, given to one's own child, is not different from the result of that given to others, and is received and perpetuated in the same way.

"As we sow, so shall we reap," is a universal law of God. Man has been placed in this world to live this life, and not to prepare for a future life; and this life will be to him and to the world just what he makes of it. If one lives a life of usefulness, he will be successful and happy and the world will receive and transmit from generation to generation undiminished all the real worth he has given to it. If one lives a life worthy of only a transient existence, a negative, indifferent, uninfluential life (and there are many who live just such lives), for that individual death may end all; but, the one, who lives a life of usefulness and influence and leaves as his legacy to the world children more competent and influential than himself, has lived a life worth while, and has added a measure of eternal value to human existence.

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